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HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM GOVERNANCE: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF PRESIDENTIAL DECISION MAKING IN THE KENTUCKY COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM

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HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM GOVERNANCE: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF PRESIDENTIAL DECISION MAKING IN THE KENTUCKY COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in the
College of Education
at the University of Kentucky

By
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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM GOVERNANCE: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF PRESIDENTIAL DECISION MAKING IN THE KENTUCKY COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM

There are more than 40 higher education systems across the United States enrolling more than 5.6 million students. Literature on higher education systems is well-documented; however, variations in system structures and governance are apparent. The limited research on governance in community college systems merits examination. This study explored presidential decision making in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System using quantitative and qualitative procedures. As a two-phase, sequential exploratory study using surveys, interviews, and documents, this study considers decision making from an organizational and environmental perspective to understand how presidents share academic, administrative, and personnel decision making. This study extends knowledge about decision making and presidential leadership in community college systems, and further contributes to the development of literature in the area of community college systems.

KEYWORDS: higher education system, community college system, governance structure, presidential decision making, shared decision making

Sarah Jill Page

12/07/2016
Date

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CHAPTER I

INRODUCTION

The notion of a comprehensive state higher education system garnered attention as a result of California's Strayer Report of 1948, which advanced systems of higher education comprised of multiple institutions with differing missions, some of which were open access colleges or universities. This report prompted the California Master Plan of 1960, which created a new structure of higher education composed of three statewide systems, including: (a) the University of California system; (b) the California State University system; and (c) the California Community Colleges system. According to O'Hara (2005), the California Master Plan of 1960 was the forerunner of similar policies adopted and amended by other states. While each state maintained distinctive economic, political, and social factors that influence higher education policy and policy formation, systems of community colleges began to emerge across the states.

Though higher education systems provided new models of governance designed to address state economic, political, and social needs, the multitude of organization structures for these systems implies variation in their governance (Dengerink, 2009; Lane, 2013). Moreover, systems are comprised of multiple campuses or colleges, resulting in functional and operational differences between the system and the colleges within the system (McGuinness, 1991). This exploratory study examines the location of presidential decision making in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System and how presidential decision making is shared between the KCTCS president and college presidents for academic, administrative, and personnel decisions.

Background of the Study

Throughout the late twentieth century, states created higher education systems, though with some variation in structure that is attributable to particular state economic, political, and social factors (McGuinness, 2013). The Kentucky Community and Technical College System examined for this study has evolved over time in response to key state legislation passed in 1934, 1962, and 1997. This evolution traces the evolution of the community colleges from independent public colleges to outreach centers of the state flagship university, and finally to a system of community colleges.

More recently, increasing enrollment and growth of the community college sector, as well as centralized organizational models embraced by other states, prompted state legislation in the 1962. This legislation, known as the Kentucky Community College Act, made the Board of Trustees of the University of Kentucky the legal governing entity of the community colleges (Newberry, 2006). The Kentucky Community College Act placed the community college system at the center of educational change and economic development as the General Assembly would authorize the addition of ten community colleges over the next decade, for a total of fourteen community colleges under the governance of the University of Kentucky.

Following the establishment of additional community colleges, the state initiated a restructuring of higher education with the passage of the Kentucky Postsecondary Education Improvement Act in 1997 (House Bill 1). Governor Paul Patton was the chief architect of this legislation. Part of the restructuring involved creating a state coordinating board, which would be known as the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education (formerly the Council on Higher Education). The Council on Postsecondary Education

(CPE) was charged with implementing quality improvement and accountability goals. The restructuring created the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) and transferred governance of thirteen of the fourteen community colleges from the University of Kentucky to the newly created system. Likewise, the Kentucky Postsecondary Education Improvement Act of 1997 transferred governance of the Kentucky Tech institutions from the Cabinet for Workforce Development to KCTCS (Garn, 2005). With this, an amendment to a previous statute outlined that the University of Kentucky may continue to operate a community college in Lexington, Kentucky, Western Kentucky University may continue to operate a community college in Bowling Green, Kentucky, and Northern Kentucky University will provide programs of a community college nature at a community college in Covington, Kentucky. Though governance of all state community colleges was not transferred to KCTCS for its initial inception, KCTCS served as a model for the administration and governance of programs and services at those institutions.

In addition to structural and organizational changes, the transfer of governance of the community colleges altered the funding model for the system and corresponding community colleges. According to the Kentucky Postsecondary Education Improvement Act of 1997, all funds appropriated to the community colleges, except for the community college remaining under the governance of the University of Kentucky, was to be transferred and allotted to the KCTCS Board of Regents. The KCTCS Board of Regents could divide the assets and funds among institutions within the system to meet the mission of the system. The intention of this revised funding model was to fund the community colleges at a level equivalent to or on par with the other public institutions;

however, transferring funds to KCTCS placed each of the community colleges in competition with one another and may have resulted in funding disparities within the newly developed KCTCS.

Since passage of the Kentucky Postsecondary Education Improvement Act of 1997, KCTCS has become the largest provider of higher education and workforce training in the state. KCTCS is governed by CPE, the state coordinating board, and the KCTCS Board of Regents. Eight board members are appointed by the Governor and the remaining six are elected members. The elected members include two members of the teaching faculty elected by faculty, two members of the nonteaching personnel elected by nonteaching personnel, and two members of the student body elected by the student body. KCTCS maintains a foundation under the leadership of an independent board of directors. The KCTCS president's cabinet includes the KCTCS president, four vice presidents, and one chancellor for academic affairs. The KCTCS president's leadership team includes the KCTCS president, cabinet members, and presidents of each of the colleges within the system. Leadership at each college consists of a college president, a chair for the board of directors, and a chair for the college foundation.

Statement of the Problem

The characteristics of higher education systems position them as unique among postsecondary institutions. Variations in the organizational structure of higher education systems implies variations in their governance. As such, higher education systems face challenges associated with making decisions, coordinating work, and sharing governance of the system with multiple campuses and constituents, including faculty and staff, trustees, and community leaders. Due to variations across higher education systems that

present multiple challenges, governance must be examined within the context of the higher education system.

The organizational structure of higher education systems presents challenges for how decisions are made and who is involved in the decision making process. In particular, the role and function of the system differs from that of the campuses in that systems are "…allocators, coordinators, and regulators" (Lane, 2013, p. 11). These organizational arrangements impact how decisions are made and whether decisions are aligned within a higher education system.

Previous research on decision making in community college systems has examined where decision making occurs, focusing on specified decision areas occurring at either the system level or campus level (Henry & Creswell, 1983; Ingram & Tollefson, 1996). Because community college systems are comprised of multiple campuses, many of which have differing missions, programs, and enrollments, there are decisions for which effective coordination of work involves a level of shared decision making among leaders in the system. Moreover, shared decision making results in a level of alignment of decisions across the system.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this exploratory study was to explore presidential decision making in KCTCS by examining the location of decision making in the system and how presidential decision making is shared between the KCTCS president and college presidents for academic, administrative, and personnel decision areas.

Two primary research questions guided this exploratory study. The first phase of this study used quantitative data to examine the location of decision making for academic,

administrative, and personnel decisions to answer the first research question. Survey data showing areas where decision making was shared between the KCTCs president and college presidents, as well as areas where the location of decision making could not be sufficiently concluded, were used to develop an interview protocol employed in the second phase of research. The second phase further explored how the KCTCS president and college presidents share academic, administrative, and personnel decision making, as well as how state economic, political, and social contexts and the roles of the KCTCS Board of Regents and college boards of directors influence decision making.

1. What is the location of decision making in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System for specified academic, administrative, and personnel decisions?
2. How do the KCTCS president and college presidents in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System share academic, administrative, and personnel decisions for the system and colleges?

Additional questions guided the study and aided in exploring presidential decision making in KCTCS. These questions attended to the particular contextual and situational factors relevant to presidential decision making based on the review of literature.

3. How do the state economic, political, or social contexts influence academic, administrative, and personnel decision making within the community college system?
4. What roles do the KCTCS Board of Regents and college boards of directors play in system-level and college-level decision making?

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the terms "college" or "colleges" refer to one or more of the colleges within a higher education system, or more specifically, a community college system. In other words, the institutions that comprise the system are referred to as colleges. The terms "college" or "colleges" are used synonymously with the term "campus," which pervades the literature on higher education systems to distinguish the system from its constituents. In addition, the term "standardization" is used synonymously with "unification" or "alignment" to refer to system decisions that are carried out among all of the colleges within the system to achieve congruence or resemblance. The following list of terms provides clarification on concepts and organizational structures of higher education systems and other relevant entities:

Higher education system: A group of two or more postsecondary institutions, each having a chief executive officer, all under a single governing board which is served by a system chief executive officer who is also not the chief executive of any of the institutions (NASH, 2015).

Segmented multicampus system: A group of two or more postsecondary institutions that are similar in mission and offer the same degree programs, each having a chief executive officer, all under a single governing board which is served by a system chief executive officer who is also not the chief executive of any of the institutions (Johnstone, 1999; Lane, 2013; McGuinness, 1991).

Comprehensive multicampus system: A group of two or more postsecondary institutions that are different types of institutions (i.e. two-year and four-year) offering different missions and degree programs, each having a chief executive

officer, all under a single governing board which is served by a system chief executive officer who is also not the chief executive of any of the institutions (Johnstone, 1999; McGuinness, 1991)

Multisite system: A postsecondary institution having a main campus and one or more branch campuses that operate as extensions with all campuses academically integrated and a single chief executive officer who leads the main campus and the branch campuses (Dengerink, 2009; Johnstone, 1999; McGuinness, 1991).

University system: A group of two or more institutions, one of which is a research university with one or more two-year or four-year campuses that are not academically integrated, and a chief executive of the main university that is also not the head of any of the campuses (Dengerink, 2009).

Board of Regents: The single governing body of a higher education system that maintains statutory authority over the system and appoints the system president. The composition and power of the Board of Regents can vary across systems (American Association of University Professors, 1990; KCTCS Board of Regents Bylaws, 2012; Westmeyer, 1990).

Board of Directors: The single governing body of a college within a higher education system that maintains authority over the college and recommends appointment of the college president to the system. The composition and power of the board of directors can vary across systems (KCTCS Board of Regents Bylaws, 2012; Kentucky Revised Statute 164.600, 2003).

System President: The chief executive officer of the higher education system who is also not the chief executive of any of the colleges within the system (Johnstone, 1999).

College President: The chief executive officer of one of the colleges within a higher education system who is also not the system chief executive (Johnstone, 1999).

State Governing Board: A multicampus governing board that has statewide authority and responsibility for the governance of all public higher education institutions in the state. The extent of their authority can vary across states (McGuinness, 2003; Millett, 1984).

State Coordinating Board: A multicampus coordinating board has no authority over the governance of public higher education institutions, but has the authority to develop a master plan, approve degree programs, and to review and recommend budget appropriations. The extent of their authority can vary across states (McGuinness, 2003; Millett, 1984).

State Advisory Board: A multicampus advisory board has the authority to develop a master plan, review program offerings and budget appropriations, but does not have the authority to approve degree programs or to recommend budget appropriations. A state advisory board can also be referred to as a state planning board or state planning agency. The extent of their authority can vary across states (McGuinness, 2003; Millett, 1984).

Significance of the Study

The prevalence of higher education systems warrants examination of their governance, which refers to the structure within which decision making occurs. According to the National Association of System Heads (2015), there are over 40 systems across the United States enrolling more than 5.6 million students. Despite their prevalence, the scope of knowledge on higher education systems is limited and becomes increasingly narrower as one examines specific types of systems, such as community college systems. For this reason, this study will extend knowledge about higher education systems, and more specifically, community college systems.

Though the literature on governance is expansive, scholars have not examined governance to a considerable extent within the context of community college systems. In fact, only two studies examine decision making in community college systems and both of these studies focus on locations of decision making as manifestations of either a centralized or decentralized structure (Henry & Creswell, 1983; Ingram & Tollefson, 1996). Hence, the proposed study will provide greater depth of knowledge of governance in community college systems, particularly considering the fact that systems have changed over time to meet state needs. The evolution of systems suggests that studies conducted in 1983 and 1996 are not necessarily applicable to an examination of community college systems in the present.

The studies that Henry and Creswell (1983) and Ingram and Tollefson (1996) conducted take a structural approach to decision making because they examined degrees of centralization and decentralization. This structural approach reinforces the limited theoretical understanding of decision making in community college systems. The

proposed study will explore presidential decision making in KCTCS and apply relevant theory from the literature to an understanding of the phenomenon. As such, the study will contribute to the development of theory by applying it to a community college system.

The community college presidency is changing with growth in community college systems. Leadership in systems requires a different set of skills and abilities to be effective given the role and contributions of system boards, system presidents, and college presidents (Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, National Association of System Heads, and American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2009). Moreover, literature on the community college presidency is limited to trends in personal and professional characteristics of presidents, influence and leadership succession, faculty and board relations, and competencies for effective leadership. The proposed study will contribute to literature on the community college presidency and further expand knowledge of leadership in community college systems.

KCTCS was selected as an exploratory site for this study because it is representative of other community college systems in terms of organizational structure and legislative authorization; however, because its creation was prompted by particular state economic, political, and social influences, the site warrants examination. Since its inception, several studies have examined the governance reform legislation resulting in the creation of KCTCS as well as the early years of the system. Despite studies examining community colleges in Kentucky, the literature is limited and does not examine current governance of the system.

Because KCTCS has been established since the 1990s, it serves as a useful site for exploring presidential decision making. Decision making processes are likely embedded

in the operations and culture of the system. Still, particular state economic, political, and social contexts that resulted in the creation of KCTCS likely permeate decision making processes. Stebbins (2001) suggests that exploration is the preferred approach when a group, process, or activity: (a) has received little or no scientific, empirical inquiry; (b) has been largely examined using research orientations of prediction and control as opposed to flexibility and open-mindedness; or, (c) has changed so much that it warrants new exploration. Because governance in community college systems has not been examined to a considerable extent, KCTCS was selected to explore presidential decision making in a community college system. KCTCS represents the predominant organizational structure of higher education institutions as cited in the literature (McGuinness, 2013; NASH, 2015). Moreover, presidential decision making represents an everyday or commonplace practice occurring in higher education systems, and more specifically, community college systems.

Summary

The number of higher education systems across the United States has increased over the last several decades. Their emergence can be attributed to legislative authorization, which highlights the influential relationship between system governance and state economic, political, and social needs. Though system governance is influenced by state needs, the organizational structure of higher education systems presents challenges for how decisions are made and who is involved in the decision making process (McGuinness, 2013). This study explored presidential decision making in KCTCS by examining the location of decision making and how decision making is shared between the KCTCS president and college presidents for academic,

administrative, and personnel decision areas. With this purpose, the study will extend knowledge about decision making and presidential leadership in community college systems, and further contribute to the development of literature in the area of community college systems.

The following chapter presents literature on higher education governance and the theoretical propositions informing the findings of the study. Additionally, the chapter highlights relevant literature on the evolution of higher education systems that includes a classification of state boards for higher education and their relationship with postsecondary institutions, a review of characteristics of community college systems, and a discussion of decision making within community college systems. Because this study explores presidential decision making, additional literature is presented in the chapter that extends the conversation around the community college presidency and leadership in higher education systems.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature review presents theories related to the governance of higher education institutions as well as decision making in higher education systems. The review begins with an examination of organizational and leadership theory informing the findings of the study. Then, a review of higher education systems contextualized in national and state governance provides a foundation for examining KCTCS. Following the review of higher education systems is an analysis of empirical research on decision making and presidential leadership in community college systems that altogether frames this study.

As suggested by Joyner (2013), the researcher began by reviewing literature reviews and meta-analyses to guide the identification of a research problem within governance and decision making in higher education systems. Also, name searches returned resources for scholars identified as experts or primary contributors to the field of research on governance and higher education systems. Moreover, research on the evolution of higher education systems was gathered to help situate governance and decision making within systems. Collecting this research involved searching databases for articles using a variety of key word combinations, such as governance and higher education, governance models and academic institutions, governance and decision making, presidents and decision making, higher education systems, and multi-campus institutions, among other key words and combinations. The multitude of returned results led to a separation of searches, such that independent searches were conducted for governance, presidency, and decision making. Separating the searches provided more

depth for gathering and reviewing relevant literature. The search was conducted until saturation was met and the search was exhausted.

To categorize relevant research as either primary or secondary sources, the researcher began by reading abstracts. For primary, critical sources, the researcher read and outlined conceptual research and further read, outlined, and critiqued empirical research. While reading and outlining, the researcher began to synthesize conceptual and empirical research to find common threads and gaps in the literature. These gaps informed the direction of the study. In addition, the researcher used footnote chasing to identify additional useful research based on cited references in articles (Krathwohl & Smith, 2005). This process led to additional searches and a cyclical process of footnoting and searching until saturation was met. For areas where critical information was needed and footnoting and searches returned no useable results, the researcher focused on published dissertations and practitioner-based research and reports.

Higher Education Governance

To understand higher education systems and the relationship between the state, systems of higher education, and their respective colleges, it is helpful to understand governance and how it manifests in institutions. Birnbaum (2004) ascribes governance in higher education institutions to the structures and processes designed "…to achieve an effective balance between the claims of two different, but equally valid, systems for organizational control and influence" (p. 5). These systems consist of professional authority assumed by the faculty and legal authority assumed by trustees and the administration. This definition of governance is appropriate for higher education institutions because it captures the parallel academic and administrative functions and

addresses who is responsible for or involved in decision making. Still, this definition addresses what governance is designed to do as opposed to what the structures and processes look like.

Other scholars have defined governance in higher education institutions as the process or structure of decision making. Kezar and Eckel (2004), in a review of theoretical perspectives applied to the study of governance in higher education, state that governance is "a multi-level phenomenon including various bodies and processes with different decision-making functions" (p. 375). They allude to the dual academic and administrative functions of institutions in the "various bodies" but further assign different decision making functions to these bodies. These differences in decision making suggest that faculty have authority over decisions involving curriculum or other academic matters, whereas the administration has authority over decisions involving fiscal and human resources, operations, and other related matters.

Amey, Jessup-Anger, and Jessup-Anger (2008) maintain that effective governance involves decision making processes that are grounded in thoughtful deliberation and evidence, attributing a sense of purpose to the decision making process. Additionally, Ingram and Tollefson (1996) define governance as "the framework within which decision making occurs" (p. 133). Further, they advance the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (1973) definition of effective decision making authority as the "agency whose decision generally stands and is not reversed" (p. 133), which associates decision making with levels of authority. Based on studies of governance reviewed from the literature, decision making is cited as an important

element of governance, though there are apparent variations in governance across states and institutional context.

Birnbaum (2004) distinguishes between "hard" governance and "soft" governance. Hard governance refers to the structures, rules, and policies in an organization that "define authority relationships, prescribe certain organizational processes and encourage compliance with enacted policies and procedures" (p. 10). On the other hand, soft governance refers to the system of social interactions in an organization that "…help to develop and maintain individual and group norms" (p. 10). Hard and soft governance have emerged from different theoretical frameworks. Elements of hard governance can be ascribed to theories of rational choice, whereas elements of soft governance are embedded in cultural and social cognition theories that focus on behaviors and expectations of participants that help mold organizational processes and culture. Though hard and soft governance can be mutually reinforcing, Birnbaum contends that organizational characteristics, such as the culture and structure, influence participant expectations of how decisions are to be made and how influence and authority are dispersed. Thus, his discussion of hard and soft governance alludes to elements of authority and influence in addition to decision making.

As previously indicated, governance in higher education encompasses the structure, rules, and policies of the institution, as well its social relationships and culture, which underscores the multitude of theories used to study governance. In a review of theoretical perspectives applied to the study of governance in higher education, Kezar and Eckel (2004) contend that previous scholarship on governance has focused on structural theories and to a lesser extent on alternative explanations for understanding

governance. Though Kezar and Eckel cite seminal literature on the application of structural theories to the study of governance in higher education, this literature does not examine structural theories in relation to higher education systems, and more specifically, community college systems.

Higher Education Systems

Higher education has become increasingly varied and complex, necessitating an examination of the structures and functions that guide the behavior of colleges and universities. Of particular interest is higher education systems, which have become the dominant form of governance of public higher education. McGuinness (1991) defines multicampus higher education systems as "…systems in which two or more institutions are governed by a single board and central staff" (p. 1). Similarly, the National Association of System Heads (2015) defines "a public higher education system as a group of two or more colleges or universities, each having substantial autonomy and headed by a chief executive or operating officer, all under a single governing board which is served by a system chief executive officer who is not also the chief executive officer of any of the systems institutions." Furthermore, Johnstone (1999) describes public multicampus systems as "…groups of public institutions, each with its own mission, academic and other programs, internal governing policies and procedures, and chief executive officer (either 'president' or 'chancellor'), but governed by a single board with a systemwide chief executive officer, generally called 'chancellor' or 'president' – whichever term is not used for the campus heads" (p. 3). While scholars have offered definitions of higher education systems with some variation, a higher education system consists of two or more institutions, a system chief executive officer and campus

executive officer, and a single governing board. Thus, higher education systems differ from state boards that have some level of authority over higher education in a given state and further differ from a multisite or university structure consisting of a main campus and a number of branch campuses.

McGuinness (1991) provides a categorization of multicampus systems that includes academically integrated multisite institutions, multicampus universities, and multicampus or consolidated governance systems. Academically integrated multisite institutions consist of a main campus and branch campuses that operate as extensions of the main campus. Because the branch campuses are extension sites, academic programs are those of the main campus and in some cases, the chief executive of the main campus is also the head of the branch campuses. Multicampus universities consist of one main research university and one or more four-year or two-year campuses. Whereas academic programs are consistent across all campuses in academically integrated multisite institutions, each campus in a multicampus university is an independent academic unit with its own mission and faculty. Moreover, the chief executive officer of the one main university is not simultaneously the head of the campuses. Instead, each campus is headed by an official appointed by the system chief executive. Finally, a multicampus system consists of multiple institutions having either similar or different missions.

Lane (2013) further classifies multicampus systems as either segmented or comprehensive. A segmented system consists of multiple campuses that are similar in mission and offer the same academic degrees, whereas a comprehensive system includes different types of institutions ranging from community colleges to four-year public institutions. Examples of a segmented system include the University of California,

California State University, and the California Community Colleges, while the State University of New York is an example of a comprehensive system. Despite the classifications, Dengerink (2009) suggests that there are differences in governance among institutions within the three categories of systems, though efficiency, mission differentiation, and external influences lead institutions to their eventual structure. Moreover, some institutions have characteristics of both multisite and multicampus universities, or of both multicampus universities and university systems.

In a review of the origins, variations, and functions of multicampus systems, Johnstone (1999) discusses comprehensiveness, which refers to the degree to which the system incorporates all of the state public postsecondary institutions, including research universities, four-year institutions, community college, and technical institutions, among others. Similar to centralization and decentralization, comprehensiveness exists on a continuum and the degree of comprehensiveness of a system varies across states. The most comprehensive systems stem from the fact that the state needs one form of authority to create and implement policy, allocate resources, hire and fire system and institutional chief executives, and determine, reinforce, or change system and institutional missions and policies.

Of critical importance is Johnstone's (1999) discussion of why institutions resist incorporation into a system. For instance, flagship universities resist incorporation because it trumps their elite status and claim to state resources. Their political clout, along with state constitutional status, has allowed them to resist incorporation. For different reasons, community colleges resist incorporation into a system because of their connection to the local communities. Moreover, their open access missions make them

subject to changes in enrollment and budgets, so even when they are incorporated into a larger multicampus system, community colleges may have more autonomy than their four-year counterparts. Finally, technical institutions that award certificates and diplomas resist incorporation because they share a similar mission with community colleges. Despite resistance to incorporation, the structure of higher education across states may take one of several forms: a single comprehensive governing board for all public postsecondary institutions; a mostly comprehensive board that includes four-year institutions, but not community colleges; a mostly comprehensive board that includes community colleges and technical institutes, but not four-year institutions; a less comprehensive system that reflects regions or sectors of higher education; or, a coordinating board with no system. Thus, the degree of comprehensive of a system varies across states and reflects particular state needs for higher education.

Although higher education systems have evolved in response to new demands and conditions over the last several decades, the role of higher education systems has been to coordinate campuses, allocate funding from the state to the campuses, enact and enforce regulations, represent the common need of the campuses to the state, and further communicate state priorities to the campuses (King, 2013; Lane, 2013; Lee & Bowen, 1971, Millett, 1984). Thus, as Lane (2013) suggests, "the traditional roles of higher education systems are that of allocators, coordinators, and regulators" (p. 11).

History of Higher Education Systems

Similar to the classification of segmented and comprehensive systems outlined by Lane (2013), McGuinness (2013) distinguishes between a consolidated system and a flagship system to explain state approaches to the creation of a formal system structure. A

consolidated system is the result of a merger of previously existing campuses under a new central administration, whereas a flagship system results "from the extension of an established campus in a system either by the creation of new campuses or the absorption of old ones" (p. 47). According to McGuinness, systems were established as a means to address duplication among colleges and universities in order to contain competition, political power and influence, and an imbalance of resources. Still, states have enacted legislation over the last several decades to create higher education systems in response to specific state issues within the particular economic, political, and social landscape at that time. However, despite the specific state context, higher education systems were designed to serve state needs. Thus, to understand the governance of higher education systems, they must be situated in histories of their creation and the corresponding context of the state.

McGuinness (2013) provides the most recent and thorough history and evolution of higher education consolidated systems, which he suggests has been the most common developmental pattern over the past century. Patterns of consolidation include the transfer of separate colleges governed by a state board to that of a new consolidated system under a single board and executive, the consolidation of separately governed colleges and universities with flagship systems, or the consolidation of existing flagship and consolidation systems. The evolution of consolidated systems has occurred in designated periods, though McGuinness argues the periods overlap with no distinct beginning or ending. These historical periods include: (a) the progressive era (1880s to 1920s), marked by the centralization of state government; (b) the consolidation era (1920s to 1940s), characteristic of efforts to insulate higher education from direct political control and

influence; (c) the capacity building, expansion, and standardization era (1940s to 1970s), involving consolidation as a means to provide access through the creation of statewide coordinating or governing structures; (d) the rise of decentralization (1980s), involving increased institutional autonomy and flexibility; and, (e) restructuring amid a changing state role (1990s to 2003), during which decentralization continues but with new funding and accountability mechanisms to address interstate competition. The historical evolution of higher education systems indicates that periods of governance change are marked by periods of transitions in states. These periods of transition result in increased pressure on systems to address a public agenda, whether it be associated with economic development, educational attainment, workforce preparation, or overall state performance measures.

State Boards for Higher Education

The history and evolution of higher education systems point to particular classifications of state boards and relationships between state boards and institutions. In a study of 25 state higher education governance models, Millett (1984) argues that state interest in higher education differs from college and governing board interests in higher education. This interest manifests in varying levels of authority exercised through either a statewide governing board, state coordinating board, or state government advisory board. Statewide governing boards are multicampus governing boards with authority and governance over all public higher education in the state. Whereas a governing board has authority over institutions, a coordinating board has no direct authority over colleges and universities but is involved in developing a strategic plan, approving academic programs, and determining state appropriations. On the other hand, an advisory board, also referred

to a planning board, has no authority over institutions or involvement in planning matters, but has the authority to take action or review such matters through a legislative process.

In addition, McGuinness (1991) outlines more specific responsibilities of the governing, coordinating, and advisory boards that dictate approaches to coordination. Specifically, the governing board advocates for institutional interests to the state, develops plans for the system of institutions under its governance, hires and fires system and institutional chief executives, establishes faculty policies, and has authority to create and implement policy and to allocate resources. Additionally, coordinating boards differ from governing boards in that they focus on state interests as opposed to institutional interests, hire and fire system executives and not institutional chief executives, do not establish faculty policies, and have the authority to make recommendations on policies and the allocation of resources. Planning agencies have limited planning authority and do not perform the range of functions associated with coordinating boards.

Data collected by Millett (1984) from interviews with state higher education executive officers suggest several advantages and disadvantages of each of the governing, coordinating, and planning models. In particular, Millet cites authority to govern individual campuses in a state system of higher education, select and appointment the chief administrative officer of each campus, and establish the operating and capital expense budgets as advantages of a governing board. On the other hand, disadvantages of a governing board include unfulfilled expectations of the state chief executive and statewide board, vulnerability of the state board to political influence, removal of lay influence from the governance of individual campuses, and inadequacy as a state planning and advisory agency. Of particular interest was that the singularity of governing

boards may encourage the legislature to appropriate a single amount of funds for all public institutions.

In addition, advantages of a coordinating board include the scope of authority, limitations placed on the power of the board to coordinate higher education, identification with the interests of the state, and lack of authority over individual campuses. Despite these advantages, Millet (1984) notes that disadvantages of a coordinating board are associated with its lack of authority over planning matters, absence of final or executive power such that campus constituents can criticize or reject recommendations, lack of political constituency other than the governor and legislature, and uncertain relationship with the executive and legislative branches state government.

Finally, advantages of advisory boards include the association between the level of influence and its objectivity as opposed to authority over institutions. In particular, Millett (1984) indicates that advisory boards are non-threatening to institutional governing boards and executives, and for this reason, institutions have a positive perception of recommendations made by the advisory board. Moreover, advisory boards hold a position within the state to administer certain programs that are not necessarily appropriate for a particular institution or system to administer. On the other hand, state advisory boards lack authority to require institutional collaboration, depend on gubernatorial or legislative decisions, increase rather than decrease legislative burden in regard to higher education, and are more concerned with its relationship with the governor and legislature as opposed to institutions. Though these advantages and disadvantages help characterize state boards for higher education, the study conducted by

Millett is based on the perceptions of state executives as opposed to chief executives of the institutions of higher education systems.

Much of the literature on higher education systems is concentrated around state coordination of higher education and trends concerning centralization and decentralization. Using survey research, interviews, and document analysis, Marcus (1997) identifies determinants of governance reform in higher education between 1989 and 1994. The survey was administered to state higher education executive officers in 49 states that asked them to identify and describe the proposal, specify who initiated the proposal, cite issues surrounding the reform, and indicate whether or not the proposal had been enacted. The data revealed that 49 proposals for governance reform has been initiated in 29 states and 27 of these proposals had been enacted between 1989 and 1994. Furthermore, the legislature was the primary initiator for 25 of the 49 proposals, 12 of which has been enacted. While governors generated 9 proposals, the rate of enactment for these proposals was the highest among all sources identified at 90 percent.

According to Marcus (1997), the most frequently cited rationale for initiating the proposal was to reduce and contain costs and 63 percent of proposals initiated for this reason were enacted. Proposals to improve accountability, a more recent phenomenon highlighted by McGuinness (2013) for the historical period spanning 1989 to 1994, had the highest enactment rate at 68 percent. However, the results reveal that for all of the rationales indicated, including reducing costs, improving accountability, improving coordination, enhancing autonomy, increasing gubernatorial or legislative authority, and a power struggle, all proposals had an enactment rate between 56 and 63 percent, which

underscores that the enactment rate for governance reform of higher education overall is relatively high.

Furthermore, Marcus (1997) conducts bivariate analysis of internal factors associated with enactment. The internal factors consist of who initiated the proposal, the desire to reduce costs, the desire to improve accountability, the desire to improve coordination, the desire to enhance autonomy, the desire to increase gubernatorial or legislative authority, whether there was a power struggle, and the existence of a rationale other than these factors. The results underscores that who initiated the proposal is the only variable positively correlated with enactment. Proposals initiated by the state board were extremely successful compared to those initiated by the governors or legislators or by multiple sources.

Multivariate logistic regression analysis using enactment and the initiating and rationale factors reveals that who initiated the proposal has the strongest correlation with enactment. Finally, correlation coefficients were used to determine whether there was a significant relationship between any pair of variables. In addition to the relationship between enactment and who initiated the proposal, only the existence of a power struggle and the effort to increase the power of the governor or legislature was statistically significant. While the results indicate multiple sources of governance reform as well as multiple rationales for proposal enactment, Marcus (1997) observes that there was no clear trend in centralization or decentralization. For this reason, proposals to improve statewide coordination and to increase institutional autonomy appeared the same number of times and were enacted in half of the instances, though slightly under the average enactment rate. Still, when examined for regional patterns, the data signal that state

enactment of centralizing or decentralizing governance reforms mirrors that of neighbor states.

McLendon and Ness (2009) examine the politics of reform of state higher education governance systems, outlining basic governance models that include the planning agency model, a statewide coordinating board model that consists of advisory coordinating boards and regulatory coordinating boards, and the consolidated governing board model. Similar to the classification outlined by Millet (1984), the authority of these models exist on a continuum ranging from maximum campus autonomy to maximum state control. The planning agency model maintains the least amount of authority and hence the least amount of statewide organization, whereas the consolidated governing board exerts the most amount of centralized authority over coordination and local campus governance. While Millet distinguishes between three state boards and classifies the coordinating board as having no direct authority over campuses but having involvement in strategic planning, approving academic programs, and determining state appropriations, McLendon and Ness introduce differences in authority between an advisory and regulatory board within the statewide coordinating board model. Specifically, the advisory board model relies on persuasion, rather than coercion, to meet state goals and the regulatory board possesses review and approval authority over institutional budgets and programs.

In their study of the politics of higher state education governance reform, McLendon and Ness (2009) discuss the cases of Florida, Kentucky, and Colorado to illustrate the particular state context leading to these governance reforms. As an extension of an earlier study by Marcus (1997), McLendon and Ness conduct survey research to

examine the political influence on governance reform informed by research on policy entrepreneurship and policy innovation and diffusion. The sample consisted of 50 state higher education executives from 1995 to 2000, whereas Marcus examined this population from 1989 to 1994. Descriptive statistics were used to assess the number and rate of passage of reforms by state and region, the importance of various conditions associated with the enactment of reforms, the influence of various political actors such as the governor, media, and campus constituents, and the prevalence of, and roles played by, policy entrepreneurs.

The results highlight that 24 governance reforms were initiated between 1995 and 2000, which represents a decline when compared to those identified by Marcus (1997) between 1989 and 1994. The passage rate for the 24 governance reforms was 63 percent, which is an increase from 55 percent between 1989 and 1994. In addition, participants cited participant sponsorship as the most important condition associated with governance reform, followed by campus dissatisfaction with existing structures and interinstitutional conflict either between campuses and the state board or among campuses. Among the various political actors, legislators, the governor, and local campus officials had the greatest influence on governance reform, further highlighting the large role of the state in governance reform as indicated by McGuinness (2013) in his historical analysis of higher education systems.

Finally, the data indicate that policy entrepreneurs are critical to influencing reform because they account for the appropriate timing to advance a restructuring initiative, build coalitions to support the initiative, and possess the skills to develop a reform proposal. A comparison between the results of Marcus (1997) and McLendon and

Ness (2009) for the measure of the conditions associated with governance reform highlights that state economic and budget conditions were cited as the most important to reform proposals between 1989 and 1994, a period during which more proposals were initiated than between 1995 and 2000. The impact of state economic and budget conditions during the period from 1989 to 1994 that Marcus examines corresponds with the period of decentralization and restructuring amid interstate competition indicated by McGuinness (2013). Thus, patterns emerging from historical trends in the formation of higher education systems, along with longitudinal data examining state boards, governance reforms, and associated political influences altogether affirm the dramatic influence of state priorities on higher education governance.

Focusing on state boards for higher education, Tandberg (2013) examines whether the presence of a consolidated governing board for higher education conditions the impact various political factors, including budget powers of the governor, legislative salaries, and interest groups, have on state support for higher education. Tandberg argues that state higher education governance structures are boundary-spanning organizations, which buffers or magnifies the effect various entities have on one another. Still, Tandberg is careful to stress that while higher education governance structures may be conceived as boundary-spanning organizations, it is still important to examine the influence different actors and institutions have on state support for higher education because politics may operate differently depending on the governance structure employed by a given state. Tandberg uses a fixed effects model to determine if a consolidated governing board influences the various political factors that affect state support for higher education. This methodology provides for the opportunity to examine the impact the existence of a

consolidated governing board for higher education has on the effect various political factors (i.e. gubernatorial role, legislative salaries, interest groups, etc.) have on higher education funding and to also account for interactions. The sample consists of all 50 states over 30 years (1976-2004).

The results indicate that the politics of the higher education appropriations process operate differently in the presence of a consolidated governing board for higher education. Specifically, a consolidated governing board reduces the budgetary powers of the governor, increases legislative salary (a measure of legislative professionalism) and the impact of the percentage the legislature that is Democratic, reduces the impact of state higher education interest groups, magnifies the effect of political ideology, and reduces the effect of voter turnout on state support for higher education.

The classification of state boards and the relationship between state boards and institutions points to a history of legislative governance reform impacting higher education. Millett (1984) classifies state boards as either governing, coordinating, or advisory, each of which has differing levels of authority over higher education institutions. Regardless of the whether states maintain a governing, coordinating, or advisory board, the presence of state board constitutes restrictions and pressures on higher education.

Community College Systems

The history of junior and community colleges highlights the extent to which they are highly responsive to the needs and interests of students and the local communities (Fryer & Lovas, 1990). The responsiveness of community colleges is evident in their open access admissions policies and vocational and workforce training programs. As

such, the local communities help shape community colleges, making their role somewhat ambiguous and their structure different across states. Community colleges are a blend between high school completion and university preparation. In some state models, community colleges are part of secondary education and in other models, community colleges are part of postsecondary education.

Similar to variations in state boards for higher education across the states, research indicates there is lack of consistency across states in terms of governance structures for community colleges. Garrett (1992) claims that the governance of community college systems influences how the colleges operate, and in turn, the extent to which community college systems are effective. For Garrett, governance refers to how a state community college system is organized and the level of state authority over the system. Similar to previous studies examining state boards for higher education, the level of authority reflects degrees of centralization and decentralization. Specifically, authority concentrated at the state level mirrors a centralized structure, whereas authority delegated to the colleges represents a decentralized structure.

Garrett (1992) examines the degree to which state community college systems are centralized or decentralized for an identified set of indicators. Using survey research design, a survey was mailed to the chief state community college officer of each of the 49 state community college systems, resulting in a 91.8 percent response rate. Thus, 45 states are represented in the study. The survey instrument was designed to assess the degree to which the system is centralized or decentralized. Based on a review of literature, development of the instrument initially reflected 36 functions indicative of centralized and decentralized operations. For each function, several approaches to

performing the function were identified as degree indicators. Degree indicators were included for each of the 36 functions in rank order reflecting a range from highly centralized to highly decentralized.

Garrett (1992) uses multiple methods to ensure reliability and validity, though he does not include the instrument or a sample of questions from the instrument. Specifically, he uses peer reviews to develop the instrument, followed by an expert panel to validate the instrument. The final instrument consists of 29 functions with their associated degree indicators. To assess internal consistency for the scale of centralization, Garrett applies Cronbach's Alpha. The resulting reliability coefficient was .94. To determine the reliability of the instrument, Garrett employs a Guttman Split-Half reliability procedure, which yielded two reliability coefficients. In order to correct the split-half procedure, he applies the Spearman-Brown prophecy formula. The split-half reliability coefficient was .87 for one half, .76 for the other half, and corrected to .77.

Data analysis consisted of assigning a high numerical value to indicators of centralization and low numerical values to indicators of decentralization. Because responses for each of the functions equated to a numerical value, Garrett (1992) was able to categorize the responses on an integer continuum scale. A centralization index, representing the sum of responses assigned to indicators of centralization, was used to rank state systems according to their degree of centralization. So, a state system with a high score represented a primarily centralized structure and a system with a low score represented a primarily decentralized structure. Based on the centralization index, Garrett highlights that no state system can be categorized as exclusively centralized or decentralized. The possible range of values on the centralization index was 29, indicating

a highly decentralized governance structure, to 118, indicating a highly centralized governance structure. The average assessed centralization index was 74, which Garrett notes is equivalent to the mid-point value of 73.5 on the centralization continuum. So, state systems with an index below 73.5 were considered to be decentralized and those with an index above 73.5 were considered to be centralized. There were several states identified as outliers, namely five states with an index value equal to or less than 50 and seven states with an index value equal to or greater than 100.

The results indicate that governance structures of state community college systems are more decentralized than centralized. Of all state systems included in the study, 54.5 percent were characterized as decentralized compared to 45.5 percent identified as centralized. Because degrees of centralization and decentralization exist on a continuum, Garrett (1992) notes that the largest proportion of state systems were classified as centralized (29.5%), followed by moderately decentralized (25.0%). Though a high concentration of systems were classified as centralized, more systems fell within the range of highly decentralized to moderately decentralized as opposed to moderately centralized to highly centralized. For instance, 24 of the 44 included systems fell within the range of decentralization for their index values compared to 20 that fell within the range of centralization for their index values on the scale.

As an extension of his previous study, Garrett (1993) identifies selected characteristics found to be associated with degrees of centralization and decentralization that he claims represent a profile of state community college systems. Garrett defines a community college system as a state that has one or more public, two-year, postsecondary, educational institutions. This definition is not grounded in research

evidence, opening the study for increased criticism. Particularly, the definition Garrett uses suggests a system of community colleges is present in states just because they have more than one public community college. On the other hand, *system* is a weighted term and implies some level of coordination and differences in organizational structure across community colleges and state boards for higher education. For instance, the state board may consist of two-year and four-year institutions together or a separate two-year board that functions as a governing, coordinating, or planning agency for community colleges. What we know about higher education systems indicates differences in the role and function of state boards for higher education and higher education systems comprised of either four-year or two-year institutions, or a combination of both.

Garrett combines 49 state community college systems in the sample as though they are similar in structure; however, McGuinness (1991), Johnstone (1999), and Lane (2013) provide a classification of higher education systems that points to structural variations across systems. The definition and classification of systems further distinguishes them from state boards. Because Garrett (1993) does not consider nuances that distinguish community college systems from one another, there is a lack of clarity in terms of whether the sample consists of community college systems or state boards for community colleges. This lack of clarity proves problematic for the generalizability of the results despite the fact that he uses a national, representative sample of community college systems.

Based on a review of literature, Garrett (1993) suggests several variables may be associated with degrees of centralization and decentralization. Namely, the type of state board, such as governing, coordinating, or planning models, is evidence of the level of

control exerted by the state or delegated to the colleges. In addition, the level of state or local control is correlated with the proportion of funding. Also, the size of the system and the time at which the system was established may dictate either a centralized or decentralized structure. The review of literature leads Garrett to identify five independent variables for the purposes of the study, though a clear explanation is missing of how these variables are grounded in the literature. These variables include the type of state board, the percentage of state funding allocated to the system, the percentage of local funding, the number of institutions in the system, and the number of years since legislative authorization for the creation of the system. The sparse literature review, coupled with the lack of research evidence for identified variables, weakens the validity of the study.

Garrett (1993) uses the same population and sample as his 1992 study that examined degrees of centralization and decentralization of state community college systems. Using survey research design, a surveyed was mailed to the chief executive officers of the 49 state community college systems. A total of 45 surveys were returned, which represents a 91.8 percent response rate. Survey responses were used to create a profile of community college systems. Garrett employs descriptive statistics for each of the five variables. The results indicate that the majority of state systems (56%) have budgets composed of state funds equal to or greater than 56 percent. Moreover, the majority of state systems (59%) are funded by less than 21 percent of local funds. According to Garrett, the number of institutions in the system represents distinct community colleges within the system and not branches or campuses of colleges.

Additionally, data analyses indicate that the majority of state systems (57%) are composed of 6 to 25 institutions, with the highest percentage of systems (34%) having 6

to 15 campuses. A total of five of the 44 institutions included in the sample have more than 45 institutions. In terms of the number of years since legislative authorization for the creation of the system, the largest proportion of state systems (39.5%) have existed between 21-25 years, with the most frequent being 25 years. The number of years community college systems have existed ranges from 4 to 84 years. All of the state community college systems represented in the sample reported having either a coordinating or governing state board. Specifically, 41.5 percent reported having a coordinating board with the majority of states (58.5%) reporting having a governing board. No system reported having a state board functioning as a planning agency.

To determine the relationship between these identified state system characteristics and degrees of centralization and decentralization assessed on a centralization index, Garrett (1993) employs correlation analyses using Pearson Product-Moment correlation coefficients. The coefficients were set to a 0.5 level of significance and indicated that two independent variables – percentage of state funds and percentage of local funds – are associated with centralization. In particular, as the percentage of state funds increases, the centralization index increases. Also, as the percentage of local funds increases, the centralization index decreases, which means the governance structure becomes more decentralized.

Next, t-test analyses were conducted to determine any differences between state systems with a high percentage of state funding and those with a low percentage of state funding. Likewise, t-test analyses were conducted to determine any differences between state systems with a high percentage of local funding and those with a low percentage of local funding. The results of the t-test analyses indicate significant differences in the

centralization indices for state community college systems funded by 50 percent or less of state funds and those funded by 50 percent or more of state funds. Also, state systems with 25 percent or less of local funding have centralization indices significantly different from systems with 25 percent or more of local funding. So, systems funded by more than 50 percent of state funds tend to be centralized, whereas state systems funded by more than 25 percent of local funds tend to be decentralized. The independent variables of type of state level board, number of institutions, and years of existence were not found to be significantly correlated with the centralization indices.

Finally, a stepwise regression analysis was used to determine the independent variables that accounted for variation in the centralization indices. Of the five independent variables, one variable – the percentage of local funding – predicts the degree of centralization at an adjusted r^2 value of .7299. This means that the percentage of local funding predicts the degree of centralization more than the type of state board, percentage of state funding, number of institutions, and years of existence. Specifically, 72.9 percent of the variation in the centralization index is accounted for by the percentage of local funding.

Based on the identified state system characteristics and their association with degrees of centralization and decentralization, Garrett (1993) indicates that the location of funding helps determine the location of authority, such that authority is concentrated at the state level or delegated to the colleges. So, an increase in state funding can lead to increased state control and a more centralized structure. On the other hand, an increase in local funding can lead to increased autonomy of the colleges and a more decentralized structure. Conversely, a decrease in local funding can lead to a decrease in local control.

Based on the results of his studies, Garrett (1992, 1993) concludes that there is a trend toward greater centralization of the governance of community college systems across the states. Though, shifts in the governance structure of community college systems are likely to occur as systems evolve to meet state demands while serving the local communities.

Characteristics of Higher Education Systems

The differing histories of higher education systems, coupled with variations in social, political, and economic state contexts, has led to greater diversity in the structure of higher education systems (Johnstone, 1999). A review of state coordination of higher education indicates that the level of authority, whether exercised through a governing, coordinating, or advisory or planning agency model, constitutes restrictions and pressures on higher education systems. Given the varied histories of higher education systems and the particular state context leading to their formation, no single governance model is ideal for systems. McGuinness (2013) suggests that the interplay between states and higher education systems suggests that classifications of systems are static and hence, evolving as state priorities shift. Still, the collective impact of higher education systems to address state needs through an alignment of institutional goals and objectives can alter how we deliver education in the coming decades.

Zimpher (2013) defines systemness as "the ability of a system to coordinate the activities of its constituent campuses so that, on the whole, the system behaves in a way that is more powerful and impactful than what can be achieved by individual campuses acting alone" (p. 27). Despite advantages of articulation and transfer mechanisms, shared services that reduce costs and effectively channel more resources, as well as system

alignment with state priorities, the collective impact of higher education systems is fraught with criticism. In particular, criticism of higher education systems centers on efficiency and bureaucratization of systems, reduced institutional autonomy, tensions between the system and respective campuses in multicampus systems, and competition among campuses within a multicampus system.

The tensions paramount in multicampus systems, as well as competition among campuses within a system stems from the different functions of the system and campuses. King (2013) outlines principles for the division of administrative governance functions within multicampus higher education systems. Governance of higher education systems includes two tiers – one tier comprised of system administration and one tier comprised of campus administration. King highlights that because the system administration works with the state board, it is more influenced by, and subject to, state politics. As Marcus (1997), McLendon and Ness (2009), and Tandberg (2013) reveal, politics is central to state coordination of higher education. Because the system is a buffer between the campuses and the state board, the system shields the campuses from political influence. Though, because campuses are not aware of this buffer, they blame the system for the result of politics and governmental decisions, resulting in mistrust between the system administration and campuses.

Moreover, while pressures on the system are generally political and associated with a public agenda, pressures on the campuses are primarily related to personnel or academics. According to King (2013), the differences between the functions of the system and campus tiers of governance result in differing priorities and approaches to issues. King suggests the governance principle of subsidiarity is important to effectively

distribute functions between the system and campuses. The principle of subsidiarity posits that administrative functions should be handled and decisions made by the lowest or least centralized authority: "the best level of governance for decisions to be made is where there is the most direct information about the body or bodies affected, with sufficient awareness of the various relevant policies and organizational factors (p. 4). Thus, subsidiarity results in more informed decision making and less remoteness of governance.

Johnstone (1999) further discusses degrees of institutional or campus autonomy from the state board and system administration. Using principles he set forth in previous publications as president of the National Association of System Heads, decisions of multicampus systems include: (a) determining, reinforcing, or changing the mission of the system and campuses; (b) hiring, evaluating, and firing the system chief executive officer and campus chief executive officer; (c) advocating system priorities to the state; (d) advocating to the campuses the priorities of the state; (e) allocating resources and missions to the campuses; (f) serving as a mediator between the state and campuses; (g) mediating disputes over missions and programs of the campuses; (h) fostering cooperation and collaboration to eliminate expenses and ensure student access and success; and, (i) evaluating programs and services to maintain accountability.

Despite variations in organizational structure across higher education systems, systems are designed to align resources and advance a singular mission for constituent campuses so that collectively, the system is more powerful than the individual campuses. Still, systems are faced with challenges associated with differing functions between the

system and campuses that causes tension. These differing functions lead to distinct sources of pressure on the system and colleges.

Decision Making

As a review of the literature indicates, the location of decision making in community college systems is limited to studies on the location of effective decision making and elements of decision making across individual community colleges. Ingram and Tollefson (1996) examine the location of decision making in 49 state community college systems, whereas Fryer and Lovas (1990) examine elements of decision making across individual community colleges. Though limited, the literature provides useful insight on the degree to which decision making in state community college systems are centralized or decentralized as well as the decision making process in individual community colleges.

Decision Making in Higher Education Systems

Empirical research on decision making in higher education systems is limited and problematic given variations across systems to include multicampus systems that are either segmented or consolidated, and university systems. Timberlake (2004) examines decision making in multicampus systems using a qualitative approach. The study involved interviews with eight participants that centered on experiences around decision making and how the participant would design a multicampus system. Data analysis revealed sixteen themes that were categorized as leadership, autonomy, centralization, and structure, and decision making inclusive of participation in decision making.

Concerning leadership, Timberlake (2004) highlights abuse of power and control, and lack of direction as experiences of multicampus systems. Furthermore, participants

cite feelings of disconnection, problems associated with autonomy, and particular organizational structures associated with either autonomy or centralization. Moreover, participants discuss particular benefits of autonomy, such as improved efficiency, limited duplication of services, and effective use of resources, whereas problems of centralization included slower decision making, increased bureaucracy, and difficulty maintaining relations between the system and campuses. The third theme that Timberlake identifies is decision making, which participants describe as cumbersome, slow, and less aligned with reality as the system became more centralized. Based on the three themes of leadership, autonomy, centralization, and structure, and decision making, Timberlake attributes two problems to multicampus systems, namely poor management of forces driving autonomy and forces driving centralization, as well as leadership qualities and priorities as critical to the success of multicampus systems.

While the research approach provides rich, descriptive data from participants, there are several methodological flaws in the study. Specifically, the sample reflects various professional and academic roles, including a vice president of academic and student services, department chair, director of financial aid, adjunct faculty, and consultant who are employed at either a private, for-profit, technical, or community college system. The differences in the professional and academic roles of participants as well as variations across the systems highlight competing perceptions of decision making that impact the results of the study. In particular, the sampling procedure does not afford a comparison of perceptions of decision making in multicampus systems because of differences in the professional and academic roles of participants. Moreover, participants are employed at different types of multicampus systems, which means the results are not

generalizable to multicampus systems or reflective of a particular type of multicampus system, such as community college systems.

In addition to weaknesses in the sampling procedures, there are evident weaknesses in the interview protocol. Timberlake (2004) does not specify whether the interviews are open or closed, or what interview protocol is used other than stating that the protocol is based on recommendations outlined in the literature. Despite discrepancies with sampling and interviewing, Timberlake identifies sixteen themes grouped into three categories, though description of the data analysis procedures is minimal. Based on data from eight participants, the number of themes is excessive. Moreover, inconsistencies in the rate of occurrence of the themes suggests methodological issues with data analysis. For instance, leadership was cited 144 times, autonomy, centralization, and structure were cited 267 times, and decision making was cited 18 times. Likewise, Timberlake collects only one form of data, which does not permit triangulation of themes to ensure internal validity.

While literature on decision making in multicampus systems is limited, the literature on decision making in multicampus community college systems is also limited and primarily focuses on comprehensive examinations involving large samples. Henry and Creswell (1983) examine the location of decision making across 26 multicampus community college systems for nine selected decision areas gleaned from the literature. The sample of multicampus systems was selected based on three criteria used by Lee and Bowen in 1971, such that "…each system had responsibility for only a portion of higher education in the state; each system had a chief executive officer with the title of president or chancellor; and each system had a central office (i.e. a system administration) that was

separate from the campuses' administration" (p. 119). The study employed a cross-sectional, multivariate design using survey data collection procedures. A survey drawn from the Aston Structured Interview Schedule was administered to the chief academic officer in each system to garner their perception of the location of decisions for the nine selected types of decisions, which included appointments of faculty, promotions of faculty, promotions of system-level administrators, salaries of system-level administrators, salaries of campus-level administrators, pending unbudgeted or unallocated money on capital items, selection of types and brand of equipment, academic long-range plan for the system, and student admission policies. Data from public documents and system records supplemented the survey data.

Data analysis involved descriptive statistics for fifteen independent variables within the categories of position of specialization, size of the system, and historical change undergone by the system and nine dependent variables for the location of decisions and the decision area. The relationship between the independent variables and the location and decision area was analyzed using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients and a histogram was used to identify patterns among the systems for any significant relationships.

The results indicate that faculty and student-related decisions are decided at the campus level, while strategic and financial planning decisions are made at the system level. The relationship between decision area variables and size, historical change, and position specialization variables indicates particular positive correlations. Specifically, the number of campuses in the system is significantly correlated with decisions about promotions and salaries of system administrators and student admissions policies.

Decisions about promotions and salaries of administrators were generally made at the system level and decisions about student admissions policies were made at the campus level for those systems with larger numbers of instructional departments or divisions. In addition, systems that had undergone few historical changes tend to make decisions about faculty appointments and promotions at the system level, though systems generally permitted these decisions to be made at the campus level. Finally, five position specializations focusing on instructional assistance and academic planning, as well as finance and maintenance, were significantly correlated with decisions about faculty appointments and promotions, salaries of campus administrators, and capital expenses. Overall, the results suggest that the location of decisions varies with the number of campuses in the system such that as the number of campuses increases, decision making becomes decentralized.

Whereas Henry and Creswell (1983) examine decision making within multicampus community college systems, Ingram and Tollefson (1996) conduct a national study on the location of decision making in state community college systems for selected academic, personnel, and administrative decision areas gleaned from the literature. Specifically, academic decisions identified from representative literature on community college governance centered on program and degree offerings, academic standards, and how students are to be educated; personnel decisions centered on who faculty and administrators should be and how to organize faculty; and, administrative decisions centered on college policies and procedures, material resources, revenue and resources, and the legal status of the institution. The sample consisted of 49 state community college systems identified by Fountain and Tollefson in 1989.

The study employed descriptive statistics using survey data collection procedures. The survey was a modified version of a list of 39 key decisions in governing higher education institutions generated by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching in 1982. Using a modified Delphi technique, an expert panel consisting of current and former presidents of community colleges and former chief executives of state community colleges validated the survey items that were informed and categorized by means of the Carnegie Foundation list and representative literature. The survey was administered to the chief executive officers of the 49 community college systems and asked them to report the location of effective authority in their states for academic, personnel, and administrative decisions using a modified Likert scale.

Data analysis involved descriptive statistics to measure the frequency distribution for each of the decisions and then weighted subtotals for the academic, personnel, and administrative decision areas. A chi-square test was used to determine whether any overall association could be discerned between the location of effective decision making authority and the type of decision. The results suggest that chief executive officers of state community college systems perceive the location of effective decision making in community colleges in their states to be at the campus level regardless of whether the decision involves academic, personnel, or administrative matters. Still, the results highlight that personnel decisions are more likely to be made locally at the campus level than either academic or administrative decisions.

Whereas Henry and Creswell (1983) examine the location of decision making for nine selected types of decisions and Ingram and Tollefson (1996) examine the location of decision making for academic, personnel, and administrative decision areas, Fryer and

Lovas (1990) outline the elements of effective decision making and communication in community colleges. Their research precipitated from public criticism and controversy over the mismanagement of community colleges in California. The pre-study consisted of a survey administered to key constituents involved in institutional governance at 23 self-nominated institutions that asked them to "…identify the issues, problems, or challenges they felt their district had experienced over the last several years, indicate how successfully they felt these issues had been dealt with, and to indicate the role district-level governance had played in dealing with the issues" (p. 35).

The results of the pre-study were used to generate a smaller sample of institutions reporting high levels of effective governance arrangements. Individual and group interviews were conducted with key members of groups reflecting all constituencies across these institutions to understand their perceptions of the structure and processes for decision making. Preliminary analysis of the data suggested that no single community college had an ideal governance model, though each institution exhibited instances of effective practices.

The studies conducted by Henry and Creswell (1983) and Ingram and Tollefson (1996) indicate that decision making in multicampus and state community college systems occurs more frequently at the campus or local level for the specified academic, personnel, and administrative decision areas. However, these results reflect the perceptions of chief executive officers of multicampus systems and chief executive officers of state systems. Moreover, the research of Fryer and Lovas (1990) reflects perceptions of multiple constituencies, including trustees, presidents, administrators, faculty and staff, and students. An important perception not considered in the literature is

that of the college or campus president or a comparison of their perceptions in relation to that of the system organization, state agency, or other constituency. Moreover, Henry and Creswell, and Ingram and Tollefson consider the location of decision making as occurring either at the system level or the campus level. In this regard, the studies do not examine decision making occurring at both the system and campus levels. Considering that system governance requires enhanced coordination and communication as a result of their complex structures, one can assume that shared decision making is evident in community college systems, particularly for those with a larger number of campuses.

While sample size can be associated with more generalizable results, the studies include large samples of community college systems, so they do not account for the particular economic, social, and political conditions of the state, which Lane (2013) argues is reflected in the governance of higher education systems. Henry and Creswell (1983) study 26 multicampus systems, Ingram and Tollefson (1996) study 49 state community college systems, and Fryer and Lovas (1990) study 23 community colleges primarily in California. Thus, studies that examine one or a few community college systems can contribute to the literature on decision making in community college systems and help contextualize the results of previous studies. Moreover, a methodological approach that includes qualitative procedures and analyses for a defined population such as presidents of campuses or colleges within systems can account for perceptions of decision making as well as the particular governance of the systems.

Lane (2013) highlights that analyses of multicampus systems have grouped state agencies with system organizations, viewing system organizations more closely with state agencies as opposed to a new or different organizational model. As a review of the

literature indicates, Henry and Creswell (1983) examine the location of decision making in multicampus community college systems, whereas Ingram and Tollefson (1996) examine the location of decision making in state community college systems and Fryer and Lovas (1990) examine elements of decision making across individual community colleges, further confirming problems in the literature with defining single campus, multicampus segmented or consolidated systems, and university systems. Likewise, a single college within a community college system can govern one or more campuses such that a single system organization governs multiple colleges who then govern one or multiple campuses. As such, more empirical evidence alongside a clear classification of the system is needed to understand decision making in community college systems, particularly as higher education systems continue evolving.

The Decision Making Process

Following a review of the elements of effective decision making and communication in community colleges Fryer and Lovas (1990) became interested in the application of this research to institutions outside of California. In turn, they include three additional community colleges based on a review of superior institutions in different political, geographical, and governance contexts. The three institutions included in the study were Jefferson Community College, Miami-Dade Community College, and Monroe Community College. The data generated several key elements of decision making, including planning, deciding, acting, reacting, and communicating that altogether highlight the complexity of leadership in governance.

Planning involves establishing goals, identifying needs related to those goals, and evaluating resources (Fryer & Lovas, 1990). It is a deliberate and reflective process

designed to match goals, needs, and resources with institutional processes. Planning is driven by institutional mission and goals, is action-oriented, and is a structured but adaptable process designed to accommodate new ideas and information. Moreover, planning includes participation across the organization, both horizontally and vertically. In this way, planning facilitates effective deciding and acting.

According to Fryer and Lovas (1990), deciding involves the exercise of power. Because there are innumerable decisions taking place in an organization, everyone in an organization exercises power to some extent. As such, the organizational climate influences the extent to which this power is harnessed to serve the institutional mission and goals. Still, there are internal and external entities, such as state regulations, that shape the context for decision making. Fryer and Lovas cite governing boards as the most important internal entity that shapes the context for decision making. In addition, Fryer and Lovas highlight that although decisions across institution involve comparable subject matter, the process for making decisions and the participants involved in the process differ considerably. Citing Birnbaum (1988) and his description of four types of institutional functioning, Fryer and Lovas conclude that the mix and interrelationships among the four types of institutions, namely bureaucratic, collegial, political, and anarchical functioning, define the participants and ways in which institutions decide. Though, their research indicates that a dominant orientation toward leadership among all of the study presidents was toward encouraging greater participation and shared decision making.

In addition to planning and deciding, Fryer and Lovas (1990) cite acting as another element of effective decision making and communication in community colleges.

The purpose of planning and deciding is to produce good outcomes; however, without acting, these outcomes cannot be achieved. In describing acting, Fryer and Lovas distinguish between management and leadership, noting that management attempts to do things right, while leadership attempts to do the right things. They argue that principles of tight and loose coupling, as defined by Karl Weick in 1976, can guide decision makers to do the right things and to do them right. Tightly coupled actions following a decision have a prescribed sequence. On the other hand, loosely coupled actions following a decision can occur in number of orders and as various times. Fryer and Lovas note that evaluation and implementation are additional forms of acting, though their observations indicate that organizations are more conscious of the processes of planning and deciding than those of acting.

Following acting, the final two elements of effective decision making include reacting and communicating. Fryer and Lovas (1990) suggest that more than other postsecondary institutions, community colleges are reactive organizations: "Community colleges, given changing economic and demographic conditions and the flow of political events in local communities, always run the risk of presuming that what has worked in the past will continue to work in the future" (p. 118). An important part of reacting is being able to distinguish between routine events and critical incidents in order to react appropriately. Experience and information are useful aids for determining what is critical and what is routine in an organization. Moreover, communicating is an important component of the process leading to a decision and the process of implementing a decision. For this reason, a regular, predictable structure of communication is essential for creating a sense of trust and credibility among members of the organization.

Likewise, members of the organization must believe communication is open and honest. Furthermore, communication occurs in a variety of avenues, including print memos or signs, speeches delivered at meetings, and electronic telephone calls, voicemails, and emails. While Fryer and Lovas outline elements of effective decision making based on their research of community colleges, the extent to which these elements are utilized or executed varies across institutions.

In an examination of governance and administration of higher education institutions, Westmeyer (1990) describes how decisions are made, the procedures that are gone through, and the data gathered that informs decision making. Decisions are informed by institutional policies outlined in various documents, including a handbook of policies or operations and policies for various boards and councils, among others. Policies span multiple areas including selection processes for administrators, faculty, and staff; budgeting and expending funds; academic programs; promotion, tenure, and salary increments; student matters; research, grants, and contracts; and, parking and security, among other areas. Therefore, there are both academic and nonacademic decision areas.

While decisions can be long-term or short-term, Westmeyer (1990) outlines procedures in making decisions. These procedures include the following: (a) someone in the appropriate position formulates a proposed decision to a problem; (b) the proposal is considered by multiple constituents if possible, namely those that have the authority to make the decision, those affected by the decision, and policy-makers; (c) interested groups consult on the decision proposal; (d) the decision maker states the decision; (e) the decision is communicated to those who initially highlighted the problem and those who became involved in the decision making process; and, (f) the decision is put into practice.

Though these procedures help explain the general process for decision making, it is one of several methods as indicated by Westmeyer and is not representative of a particular type of postsecondary institution.

Community College Leadership

Amey and Twombly (1992) argue that while leadership behavior is influenced by the context and the particular institutional environment, ideas about leadership are also shaped and constrained by beliefs and images about the kind of leadership called for and the kinds of characteristics of those that assume leadership roles. For this reason, they use discourse analysis to question the relevance of images of leadership in community colleges and how the ideologies behind these images have maintained a particular type of leader, and consequently, excluded or limited leaders that do not fit this image. Amey and Twombly suggest that discourse analysis provides the means to examine how features of the social context, such as gender, power, and roles impact language.

In order to analyze images of leadership, Amey and Twombly (1992) frame the study using organizational life cycle theory, focusing on the life cycle schema developed by Gardner in 1986 and generations of community college development identified by Deegan and Tillery in 1985. Organizational life cycle theory posits that organizations progress through four stages with identifiable characteristics and problems. Leaders play a significant role in facilitating or hindering progress through the stages, which suggests that an organizational structure or leadership style effective in one stage is not necessarily effective in another stage. For this reason, Amey and Twombly expect to observe different images and styles of leadership related to the organizational structure at various stages in community college development. Gardner's stages include birth, growth,

maturity, and renewal or decline, which parallel Deegan and Tillery's stages of first generation, second and third generation, fourth generation, and fifth generation.

Amey and Twombly (1992) review literature on community college leadership from the early 1900s to the present using a variety of materials, including books, articles, and conference publications. The stages of community college development identified by Gardner in 1986 and Deegan and Tillery in 1985 frame the literature in order to help them identify "…the organizational context and structure, expectations of leadership, and most importantly, the images and language used to describe and reinforce leadership" (p. 130). Application of the framework leads to the identification of five generations of community college development according to leadership tasks that are attributed to growth and development. As a form of discourse analysis, Amey and Twombly employ an approach to post-structural criticism outlined by Cherryholmes in 1988 to examine stories within the texts and stories that share a common language, culture, or context. This approach is characterized by a process of reading, interpretation, criticism, communication, and evaluation and judgment. Amey and Twombly appropriately acknowledge their role as readers and the fact that biases influence the reading and interpretation of texts, which may not be consist with other readers.

Analysis of community college leadership literature resulted in a discourse reflecting a set of relevant concepts about community colleges, including "constant change, democratic ideals about their role in society, and powerful autocratic leaders" (Amey & Twombly, 1992, p. 132). The discourse further contains consistent and value-laden images, which Amey and Twombly (1992) suggest has allowed scholars and practitioners to maintain "…a sense of cohesion, organizational definition, and

professional boundaries over time" (p. 132). Though this pattern of discourse is effective for early stages of community college development, it runs counter to organizational change if the leadership images are not appropriate. In addition, Amey and Twombly contend that the discourse creates and reinforces a particular image of leadership, which has resulted in the exclusion of leaders who are not viewed as legitimate because they do not fit this image.

The images of leadership created and perpetuated by the discourse center on the "great man" style of leadership, which suggests that a few select leaders have shaped the community college movement. This notion of "great leadership from a select few" reinforces a particular style of community college leadership that marginalizes some leaders (p. 145). This is particularly relevant considering community college systems have multiple leaders responsible for decision making that impacts the direction of the system and individual campuses. Based on definitions of a system grounded in the literature, a community college system has a system chief executive officer and campus presidents that must work together to advance the mission of the system and serve the needs of the state (McGuinness, 1991; Johnstone, 1999; National Association of System Heads, 2011). The limits to leadership resulting from the discourse around the community college movement suggests that scholars have not considered research outside of the field of community college leadership (Amey & Twombly, 1992). Moreover, a core of scholars has advanced research on community college leadership, resulting in minimal contributions by others offering an alternative image. Amey and Twombly conclude that community college scholars and practitioners are challenged to create alternative constructions of leadership that reflect the discourse of the community

college movement but meets the demands for organizational change and evolving structures: "Using terms like *great man, pioneer, builder, commander, visionary*…perpetuates the view that the success or failure of any community college rests in the hands of one or a few 'great leaders'" (p. 147). Evolving organizational structures and the rise of community college systems, coupled with the limitations of images of community college leadership, suggest additional contributions are needed for literature on community college leadership.

Community College Presidency

Amey and Twombly (1992) reference a few scholars that have contributed to the field of community college leadership. One of these scholars is George Vaughan, who published the first study on the community college presidency in 1986 and has since been considered a national expert on this role. This study examined the personal and professional characteristics of community college presidents using the Career and Lifestyle Survey (CLS) administered to 838 community college presidents, of which 71 percent responded. The CLS survey was administered to community college presidents again in 1991, 1996, and 2001, providing data for assessing how the presidency has changed over time. Based on the 1996 national study of community college presidents, Vaughan and Weisman (1998) examine presidents' personal and professional characteristics. The CLS survey was administered to 926 community college presidents, with a response rate of 73 percent. In addition, interviews with 13 community college presidents provide narrative data that further reveals particular challenges that presidents face.

Of particular interest is internal and external threats to the mission of the community college that interview participates reference. Though participants point to decreased funding that affects the mission of open access, one participant highlights the correlation between funding and efficiency: "There is a sense that colleges have waste and duplication, [sic] that business and industry were required to downsize and colleges never did. To a great extent, we have invited the scrutiny that comes from legislatures who have decided that they don't really need to put more money into higher education; they just need to reshuffle what is there" (p. 91-92). The same participant alludes to demands for efficiency and effectiveness that have resulted in alternative structures and ways of doing business. This narrative reinforces the history and evolution of higher education systems outlined by McGuinness (2013). As higher education systems have evolved, McGuinness highlights trends toward centralization as a result of increasing demand for accountability, efficiency, and the desire for community colleges to serve state needs. Still, interview participants highlight that the legislature and state level board have placed restrictions on the colleges that interfere with their ability to meet the needs of their communities.

Using interview data, Vaughan and Weisman (1998) further examine challenges facing the community college presidency in the 21st century. Participants address leadership and governance as a challenge facing the presidency. Patterns in the narrative data allude to the need for "adequate leadership" that provides a supportive and motivating environment and solid academic experiences for students (p. 140). Though, adequate leadership is ambiguous and subject to variations in the organizational structure and people assuming leadership positions. One participant identified the need for a

system of governance that includes faculty and staff as partners in the decision making process, which alludes to shared decision making. Contrary to images of the "great man" style of leadership that Amey and Twombly (1992) identify in the discourse on community college leadership, shared governance implies the contributions of many to the decision making process. Another participant feared the involvement of trustees in college management would cause "the line between policy and administration to become blurred" (p. 140), reinforcing the external threats identified by participants. As a result, community college presidents face criticism and demands from multiple constituencies.

When asked what skills and traits are most important for the community college presidency in the 21st century, one participant discusses the expectation for shared governance: "I think one thing that is and will continue to be important is the ability to involve other people successfully in the governance of the college" (p. 150). Three additional participants describe participatory management as an important characteristic of presidents to maximize the talent and resources of everyone in the institution. Another participant references the ability to work in groups and create a team environment, which echoes shared governance and decision making. These characteristics, though identified from the perspective of individual community college presidents, resonates strongly for community college systems where system and campus leaders must work together to achieve institutional goals.

The narrative that Vaughan and Weisman (1998) collect helps generate an image of the community college presidency that has characteristically evolved from the "great man" style of leadership identified by Amey and Twombly (1992). Still, literature on community college leadership is framed from the perspective of a single president within

the context of their individual college. The perspective of leaders from a system of community colleges provides data that is relevant to current organizational structures of community colleges. Though participant narratives echo the use of shared governance and decision making, and participatory management as key presidential skills, there is little evidence of what shared decision making resembles in a community college system.

Leadership in Higher Education Systems

In addition to skills and abilities that community college presidents identify as essential to leadership, several professional organizations have outlined competencies for community college leaders vital to the success of institutions. McNair and Phelan (2012) examine perceptions and reflections of six community college chief executive officers (five presidents and one chancellor) on the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) competencies (2005). Specifically, McNair and Phelan aim to understand how participants acquired and developed the competencies, how they were integrated into professional practice, and any components missing from the framework. The results point to organizational strategy as one of the most useful competencies, which the AACC (2005) defines as leaders who "strategically improve the quality of the institution, protect the long-term health of the organization, promote the success of all students, and sustains the community college mission, based on knowledge of the organization, its environment, and future trends" (p. 3). This competency alludes to structural approaches such that participants cite organizational strategy as useful for allowing them to operate effectively, access and receive information, and allocate resources to enhance productivity. Additionally, presidents cited a systems perspective as a missing competency. A systems perspective helps see connections, which runs counter

to transitions in the structures of higher education and the prevalence of higher education systems.

The contributions of system board members and their chairs, system chief executives, and campus chief executives to the leadership of higher education systems highlight principles and strategies that are of critical importance to system effectiveness. The Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB), the National Association of System Heads (NASH), and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) (2009) outline key principles for leadership effectiveness in higher education systems. These principles include "providing a collective and unified voice; building interdependent support; balancing central authority with institutional differentiation, autonomy, and creativity; strategic planning and direction; and, performance assessment" (p. 4). Within each of these principles, the national associations outline the roles of the system board, system chief executive, and campus executives, altogether underscoring the different roles and contributions of these leaders to system effectiveness.

Theoretical Framework

Whereas the literature on governance has been dominated by structural theories, more recent literature underscores the importance of human conditions in governance (Kezar and Eckel, 2004). Birnbaum (1985-1989) focuses on the bureaucratic, political, collegial, and symbolic models. These models characterize the university as a bureaucracy, collegial system, political system, and organized anarchy, altogether reinforcing structural and human condition elements of governance but as separate

models. The result of an integration of the bureaucratic model with the political, collegial, and symbolic models is the cybernetic model.

As an exploratory study, the researcher reviewed and applied theory following data analysis to help illustrate presidential decision making in KCTCS. For this reason, the models and associated elements applicable to the findings of this study are explored in the following sections. Altogether, these models outlined in *How College Work: The Cybernetics of Academic Organization and Leadership* (Birnbaum, 1988) are used to frame the findings of this study.

Structural Model

Birnbaum (1988) outlines the characteristics of a bureaucracy, which include the following: (a) systematic coordination of the work of many individuals designed to increase efficiency; (b) reliance on rules, regulations, and written job descriptions; (c) formal division of labor; and, (d) increased specialization.

A symbol of a bureaucracy is the organizational chart that communicates levels of authority and lines of communication and coordination. Flat charts are those with few levels, resulting in clearer communication; whereas, tall charts are those with more levels and hence, more distortion in the flow of communication. Thus, the structure of an organization impacts how functional areas interact with one another, which refers to the extent to which two parts of an organization are tightly or loosely coupled. Where an office or position is located on the organizational chart signals the level of importance of that area. So, compliance with rules and regulations is reinforced by the hierarchy evoked in the organizational chart, such that activities of lower level offices or positions are supervised by the next higher level of office or position. That being said, the offices or

positions higher on the organizational chart maintain a greater level of influence than those on the lower level. Still, Birnbaum (1988) contends that there is no perfect structure, and that every structure provides certain benefits to the organization but also makes other benefits more difficult to obtain.

In addition to the organizational chart, bureaucracies are also driven by rules, regulations, and written job descriptions. These documents guide behavior, which increases organizational certainty (Birnbaum, 1988). In particular, these documents outline how to handle decisions that occur on a regular basis. More specifically, written job descriptions dictate who is responsible for various tasks. This formal division of labor prevents duplication and makes it possible for people to specialize in a particular area. According to Birnbaum (1988), "Together they know more and are more efficient in dealing with issues within their specific spheres of interest than would be two people who shared the same general knowledge about both areas" (p. 112).

Birnbaum (1988) contends that institutions have become more administratively centralized as a result of requirements to rationalize budgets and funding, implement equitable processes and procedures, and advocate to powerful external agencies. While institutions have become more administratively centralized, increased faculty specialization and decreased administrative control at the local level have resulted in decentralization of educational decision making, which in turn leads to continued reduction in administrative authority. Thus, the result of centralized administrative decision making is a reduction in administrative authority, whereby schools or departments become the locus of decision making (Birnbaum, 1988).

Based on the characteristics of bureaucracies, Birnbaum (1988) suggests that leadership is most effective if activities and procedures are viewed as legitimate. This can be achieved through tradition or charisma. People accept activities from someone because that is how it has always been done or because they accept the personal authority of the leader. Leaders can also create a control system whereby people accept activities from someone because they are consistent with the rules and norms that all people in the organization accept. Moreover, the value of bureaucratic leadership is delegation of authority. The trustees or president are not responsible for all of the work of the organization. Instead, responsibilities are assigned to a particular position, the right to make decisions or expend funds is granted to that position, and the person in this position is held accountable.

Altogether, bureaucratic organizations are rational organizations, meaning "…there is some conscious attempt to link means to ends, resources to objectives, and intentions to activities" (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 113). While bureaucratic procedures may appear to pose barriers to people in the organization, they also have the complimentary function of limiting administrative discretion. Leaders delegate responsibilities, and with that authority in decision making. The characteristics of bureaucracies create for the outside world an image of regularity and stability that proves beneficial for their existence.

Political Model

The political frame views organizations as arenas in which different groups compete for power and limited resources. At the center of political organizations is power to obtain preferred results, particularly in situations where members disagree. The power

of one person or group depends on the importance of their contribution to the organization and the extent to which that contribution is available from other sources (Birnbaum, 1988). Moreover, there are various forms of power or authority that may be more or less relevant in a particular situation. For instance, the president has power through his or her position, administrators have power through their access to procedures and budgets, and faculty have power related to their expertise or tradition. This power can be exercised in different ways depending on the situation and to the advantage of those positions.

Competition for resources creates conflict in organizations; however, the political model views conflict as a normative part of organizational life because individuals have different and often competing perspectives, needs, and values. What manifests is several communities because of differences in the preferences for organizational decision making (Birnbaum, 1988). No one community has enough power to dominate all of the other communities at the same time, so coalitions form among various groups to advance a particular agenda. Birnbaum argues that turmoil and instability are not the result of power and competition, but instead, that organizations maintain "quasi-stable dominant coalitions whose power serves to inhibit overt conflict" (p. 136). Moreover, people can belong to more than one coalition, each of which participates in different political processes. This cross-cutting of coalitions helps balance the location of power and thus, minimize the effects of political processes on the stability of the organization.

Because power can be concentrated in the wrong places in an organization or so dispersed that the organization cannot achieve its goals, Birnbaum (1988) suggests that leaders need political acumen and skill to advance their personal interests as well as those

of the organization. Often, this political acumen and skills involves forming coalitions and interest groups composed of various individuals with the same interests. Bargaining and negotiations among key players in organizational coalitions is essential to making decisions and achieving goals. As a result, physical presence and timing are important for leadership in political organizations.

Moreover, because power belongs to many positions and groups, leadership is exercised by many people in a political organization (Birnbaum, 1988). Representatives of coalitions must all be leaders in the sense that they are advancing that particular agenda and entering into negotiations with representatives of other coalitions. Still, the central figure of power is the president. So, this person must be skilled at analyzing differences in the interests of various groups and illustrating for the conflicting groups how their own interests are advanced by accepting a compromise. Finally, the president must identify the issues that political groups and coalitions should deal with in order to elicit support because participation is costly in terms of time, energy, and money.

Altogether, power and conflict permeate political organizations because of differences in what goals should be achieved and how best to achieve them with limited resources. Coalitions form as a result of these competing interests in order to advance a particular agenda. Because people belong to more than one coalition, and these coalitions participate in different political processes, there is a balance of power that prevents instability. Political leaders define for these coalitions the issues to deal with, and are also skilled at mediating so that conflicting groups can reach a compromise. The characteristics of political organizations permit involvement of multiple people though various forms of power that can bring about change and stability.

Anarchical Model

According to Birnbaum (1988), the anarchical model exhibits problematic goals, unclear technology, and fluid participation. Problematic goals arise when organizations provide an ambiguous framework for goals or develop goals after, rather than before, programs have been developed. Furthermore, Birnbaum defines technology as the "processes through which organizations convert inputs to outputs" (p. 155). Anarchical organizations have technology in place but are unclear about how the technology contributes to meeting or not meeting goals. Moreover, because there is no clear evidence as to which technology is more effective than another, anarchical organizations choose technology "based on trial and error, previous experiences, imitations, and inventions born of necessity" (p. 156).

Finally, anarchical organizations maintain fluid participation, such that there are various formal and informal committees and groups at multiple levels throughout the organization. For this reason, organizational problems and issues move through one or more levels of the organization for resolution. Moreover, members move throughout parts of the organization, so their participation in an issue depends on what other issues are present that require their attention. Birnbaum (1988) contends that there are few instances in which decisions on two related issues are made by the same people.

Because an organizational chart is not an adequate representation of an anarchical organization, Birnbaum (1988) uses streams of problems, solutions, participants, and choice opportunities to illustrate how these areas converge in an anarchical organization. Problems arise looking to be resolved, solutions are present looking for issues to which they can solve, and participants are looking for decisions to make. From this situation

emerges choice opportunities that are independent and loosely coupled to the other three streams.

Choice opportunities refer to routine decision making, including approving the annual budget or the appointment of administrators; however, because of problems with specifying goals, the organization cannot determine how best to achieve them or who will participate. The result is garbage-can decision making. The garbage cans represent choice opportunities through which the streams of problems, solutions, and participants flow. In the garbage can, these three streams converge with a particular choice and they become attached, or tightly coupled. This tight coupling is not necessarily logical but dependent on the time at which the decision is made, the availability of other choice opportunities, and the particular problems, solutions, and participants in the garbage can at that time. According to Birnbaum (1988), "this indeterminacy introduces ambiguity and uncertainty into the decision arena. Decision making becomes increasingly difficult when irrelevant problems and solutions (that is, garbage) becomes attached to choice opportunities" (p. 162).

Thus, decisions are made based on the inferences and judgments people make under conditions of uncertainty, which reflects three decision styles of resolution, flight, and oversight. Resolution involves working through problems rationally until they are resolved. Decision making by flight involves waiting for a more attractive choice opportunity to enter the garbage can that will solve a problem. Lastly, oversight involves quick decision making so that problems and participants have no time to get involved in the decision.

Birnbaum (1988) examines the research of Cohen and March (1974), who developed the anarchical model and eight rules for leaders of anarchical organizations to influence decision making. These include the following: (a) choose a small number of issues to attend to, delegating or ignoring others; (b) persist in decision making, even for failed or unfavorable decisions; (c) focus on substantive outcomes rather than your symbolic status; (d) encourage participation of those who oppose a solution or decision; (e) flood the organization with proposals to avoid stalled decision making; (f) increase the number of choice opportunities that might prove attractive to problems; (g) identify and implement small changes that when compounded, can have a large effect; and, (e) interpret history to provide context for decision making.

Altogether, anarchical organizations display problematic goals, unclear technology, and fluid participation. Streams of problems, solutions, and participants collide with choice opportunities, which is a process referred to as garbage-can decision making. Because this collision depends on the type of problem, availability of solutions, which participants are involved, and the timing of choice opportunities, decisions are often made with ambiguity and uncertainty. For this reason, decision making is not rational, but particularly advantageous in complex and turbulent environments.

Summary

Governance refers to the process or structure of decision making that often involves multiple constituents (Amey, Jessup-Anger, and Jessup-Anger, 2008; Ingram and Tollefson, 1996; Kezar and Eckel, 2004). Though higher education systems have become the dominant form of governance for public higher education, the classification of higher education systems has become increasingly varied and complex. As a result, the

literature on higher education systems often includes state boards for higher education and is limited in scope for specific types of systems, such as community colleges.

Literature on decision making in community colleges systems focuses on state boards for community colleges and further examine decision making occurring at the system level, as opposed to both the system and campus levels. Still, Henry and Creswell (1983) and Ingram and Tollefson (1996) indicate that decision making in multicampus and state community college systems occurs more frequently at the campus or local level for the specified academic, personnel, and administrative decision areas. Overall, more empirical evidence alongside a clear classification of systems is needed to understand decision making in community college systems, particularly as higher education systems continue evolving.

As an exploratory study, the researcher reviewed and applied theory following data analysis. Specifically, the researcher used the work of Birnbaum (1988) to frame the findings in order to develop an understanding of presidential decision making in KCTCS. These elements, along with an understanding of the context of the system, illustrates how presidents share academic, administrative, and personnel decision making.

The following chapter reviews exploratory research as well as selected data sources that help answer the research questions. Data collection and analysis procedures are outlined for the use of surveys, interviews, and documents. Additionally, validity and reliability of the procedures used for the study are outlined.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The Kentucky Postsecondary Education Improvement Act of 1997 resulted in the creation of a higher education system designed to govern the state community and technical colleges. The purpose of this exploratory study was to explore presidential decision making in KCTCS by examining the location of decision making and how presidential decision making is shared between the KCTCS president and college presidents for academic, administrative, and personnel decision areas.

According to Stebbins (2001), "researchers explore when they have little or no scientific knowledge about the group, process, activity, or situation they want to examine but nevertheless have reason to believe it contains elements worth discovering" (p. 6). As indicated in the review of literature, researchers need a better understanding of decision making in community college systems, particularly as higher education systems continue evolving to meet state needs. Because exploratory studies facilitate exploration of a phenomenon using a variety of data sources (Stebbins, 2001), this study used data obtained through surveys, interviews, and documents to examine presidential decision making in KCTCS. A modified survey instrument developed by Ingram and Tollefson (1996) was used to gather data on the location of decision making. Also, a semi-structured interview protocol was used to gather data on the decision making process. Additionally, relevant documents were collected and analyzed.

This chapter will describe in detail the methodology to be used in this exploratory study. The major sections of this chapter include research questions, research paradigm, rationale for the study, approach to the study, methodological overview, role of the

researcher and ethical considerations, participants, data sources, quantitative data collection and analysis, qualitative data collection and analysis, and validity and reliability of the procedures.

Research Questions

The purpose of this exploratory study was to explore presidential decision making in KCTCS by examining the location of decision making and how presidential decision making is shared between the KCTCS president and college presidents for academic, administrative, and personnel decision areas.

Two primary research questions guide this exploratory study:

1. What is the location of decision making in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System for specified academic, administrative, and personnel decisions?
2. How do the KCTCS president and college presidents in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System share academic, administrative, and personnel decisions for the system and colleges?

Additional questions helped guide the study and aided in exploring presidential decision making in KCTCS. These questions attend to the particular contextual and situational factors relevant to presidential decision making based on the review of literature.

3. How do the state economic, political, or social contexts influence academic, administrative, and personnel decision making within the community college system?

4. What roles do the KCTCS Board of Regents and college boards of directors play in system-level and college-level decision making?

Research Paradigm

Philosophical paradigms influence the research process and need to be identified (Creswell, 2009). Creswell views paradigms as a general orientation about the world and about the research process that the researcher holds. Two philosophical paradigms – pragmatism and constructivism – frame this exploratory study of presidential decision making in KCTCS.

Pragmatism concerns itself with actions, situations, and consequences and is not associated with a particular philosophy or reality (Creswell, 2009). For this reason, pragmatism embraces both quantitative and qualitative methods and pragmatic researchers are free to choose the methods, techniques and procedures to best understand the central subject of the study. Though, with the freedom of using both quantitative and qualitative methods, researchers need to provide a rationale for the selection of both methods and be mindful of when and how the methods are mixed. Finally, pragmatism highlights that research takes place in the cultural, historical, political, and social contexts of society. As such, studies using both quantitative and qualitative methods may introduce or shift to another philosophical paradigm (Creswell, 2009).

Constructivism assumes that people seek understanding of the world in which they live and work (Creswell, 2009). Rather than starting with a theory, the goal of research is to inductively develop a theory or pattern of meaning. For this reason, the researcher plays an active role in interpreting the meanings and perceptions ascribed by the population. By playing an active role, constructivist researchers recognize how their

own backgrounds shape their interpretation of data acquired from the field. Moreover, according to Creswell, the meanings and perceptions ascribed by the population are usually negotiated socially and historically. As philosophical paradigms, both pragmatism and constructivism attune themselves with the particular contexts surrounding the central subject of the study and frame this exploratory study of presidential decision making in KCTCS.

Rationale for the Study

The multitude of organizational structures for higher education systems results in variations in their governance, leading to differences in system and campus functions (Dengerink, 2009; Lane, 2013; McGuinness, 1991). In addition, higher education systems are part of the larger economic, political, and social contexts of the state, and thus have differing environmental pressures that influence system governance and decision making (McGuinness, 2013). Differences in system and campus functions, coupled with state influences, result in a different set of leadership skills and abilities that presidents need to be effective. These leadership skills are subject to differences in the roles and contributions of the system board, system chief executive, and campus executives to system effectiveness (AASCU, AGB, & NASH, 2009). Thus, a study examining presidential decision making in a community college system can make a significant contribution to the literature.

Approach to the Study

Stebbins (2001) defines social science exploration as "a broad-ranging, purposive, systematic, prearranged undertaking designed to maximize the discovery of generalizations leading to description and understanding of an area of social or

psychological life" (p. 3). Because exploration emphasizes the development of theory from data, to explore a phenomenon, the researcher must approach it with flexibility in looking for data and open-mindedness about where to find the data (Stebbins, 2001). As such, the goal of exploratory research is the production of generalizations about the phenomenon that are derived from the data through a process of induction. The researcher then weaves these generalizations into a theory explaining the group, process, or activity under study. As researchers come to understand the group, process, or activity under study, the field of research shifts from exploration to more prediction and confirmation with the development of generalizations made possible by the accumulation of exploratory research and application of the theory that has been emerging since the initial study (Stebbins, 2001).

Stebbins (2001) suggests that exploration is the preferred approach when a group, process, or activity: (a) has received little or no scientific, empirical inquiry; (b) has been largely examined using research orientations of prediction and control as opposed to flexibility and open-mindedness; or, (c) has changed so much that it warrants new exploration. As indicated in the review of literature, governance in community college systems has not been examined to a considerable extent. Moreover, systems have evolved over the last several decades, so early research is not necessarily applicable to a study of current systems. Similarly, the presidency is changing with growth in community college systems. Literature on the community college presidency is limited to trends in personal and professional characteristics, influence, and competencies for effective leadership. Because little or no studies have examined presidential decision making in a community college system, an exploratory study using quantitative and qualitative data is wholly

justified in order to increase the depth of knowledge of governance of community college systems and presidential decision making.

While exploratory researchers do not use specific theories or conceptualizations to guide studies, sensitizing concepts, or guiding ideas, can help guide and expand exploration while posing no threat of contamination to the collection and interpretation of data. These sensitizing concepts lead the researcher toward generalizations about the central subject of the study but also some of its marginal manifestations. Though qualitative data prevail in exploratory studies, Stebbins (2001) suggests that both quantitative and qualitative data may be gathered during exploration. This data gathering takes the form of quantitative surveys, observations, interviews and focus groups, and the contents of documents written by and about the people, process, or activity under study. Furthermore, Johnson and Christensen (2008) note an advantage of collecting multiple sets of data using different research approaches is that it enhances the quality of the data since each of the research approaches have different strengths and weaknesses. Moreover, both quantitative and qualitative findings can be mixed or triangulated to provide greater understanding of the group, process, or activity under study. Though it encompasses a distinctive methodological approach, exploration is "...where the art of science is most widely exercised...through inductive reasoning, as researchers discover order in what initially appeared to them as chaos (Stebbins, 2001, p. 23).

Methodological Overview

This exploratory study employed both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a more comprehensive understanding of presidential decision making in KCTCS. While the use of both quantitative and qualitative data provided a more complete picture of the

central subject of the study, it also allowed the researcher to collect different but complementary data to aid in triangulation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). According to Creswell and Plano Clark, it is not enough to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. The data need to be mixed in some way so that together they provide a more complete depiction of the group, process, or activity under study. Mixing can occur when the researcher merges or converges the two datasets by bringing them together, connecting the two datasets by having one build on the other, or embedding one dataset within the other so that one dataset provides a supportive role for the other dataset. Moreover, the quantitative and qualitative data were collected sequentially, meaning that data collection occurred in phases.

Phase One

The purpose of the first phase of research was to understand the location of decision making in KCTCS. Quantitative data were collected first through the administration of a modified version of a survey instrument used by Ingram and Tollefson (1996) that examined the location of decision making for specified academic, administrative, and personnel decisions. The survey used a five-category, modified Likert scale to assess whether decision making for various academic, administrative, and personnel decisions occurs: (a) at the local college; (b) primarily at the college, but with some input from the community college system; (c) equally between the system and college; (d) primarily at the system, but with some input from the college; or, (e) at the system. The survey was administered electronically through Qualtrics software to the participants consenting to participate in this phase of the study. Preliminary survey data

were used to inform the development of a semi-structured interview protocol for the second phase of the study.

Phase Two

The purpose of the second phase of research was exploratory in nature and aimed to understand how the KCTCS president and college presidents share decisions for the system and colleges. As previously indicated, preliminary survey data from the first phase of the study were used to identify areas where decision making seemed to be shared between the system president and college presidents, as well as areas where the location of decision making appeared to be dispersed based on preliminary analysis. The interview protocol was developed to more closely explore shared academic, administrative, or personnel decision making involving the KCTCS president and college presidents. Additionally, the interview protocol addressed external influences on decision making and the roles of the KCTCS Board of Regents and boards of directors in relation to this decision making.

Qualitative data were collected through interviews with presidents consenting to participate in this phase, as well as documents gathered by the researcher that were relevant to presidential decision making. Because participants could elect to participate in all, part, or none of the study, the sample used for conducting interviews was not identical to the sample of participants that completed the survey. The researcher made this design decision in order to maximize the total sample size for the study. Then, interviews were transcribed and coded by the researcher using pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of participants. Documents were collected during interview data collection and transcription, and were critically reviewed to assess their authenticity and accuracy. The

process of interview analysis and document collection and analysis was an iterative process. As such, the researcher turned to documents to help answer questions and provide clarification for issues and examples provided in the interview data. In this way, qualitative transcription of interviews and documents converged such that documents helped develop and confirm coding and emerging themes. Following qualitative data analysis of interview transcripts and documents, quantitative data were reintroduced and both quantitative and qualitative data were mixed for the identification of emerging patterns and themes, explanatory interpretations, and the development of theory. Figure 3.1 on the next page summarizes the points of data collection and analysis.

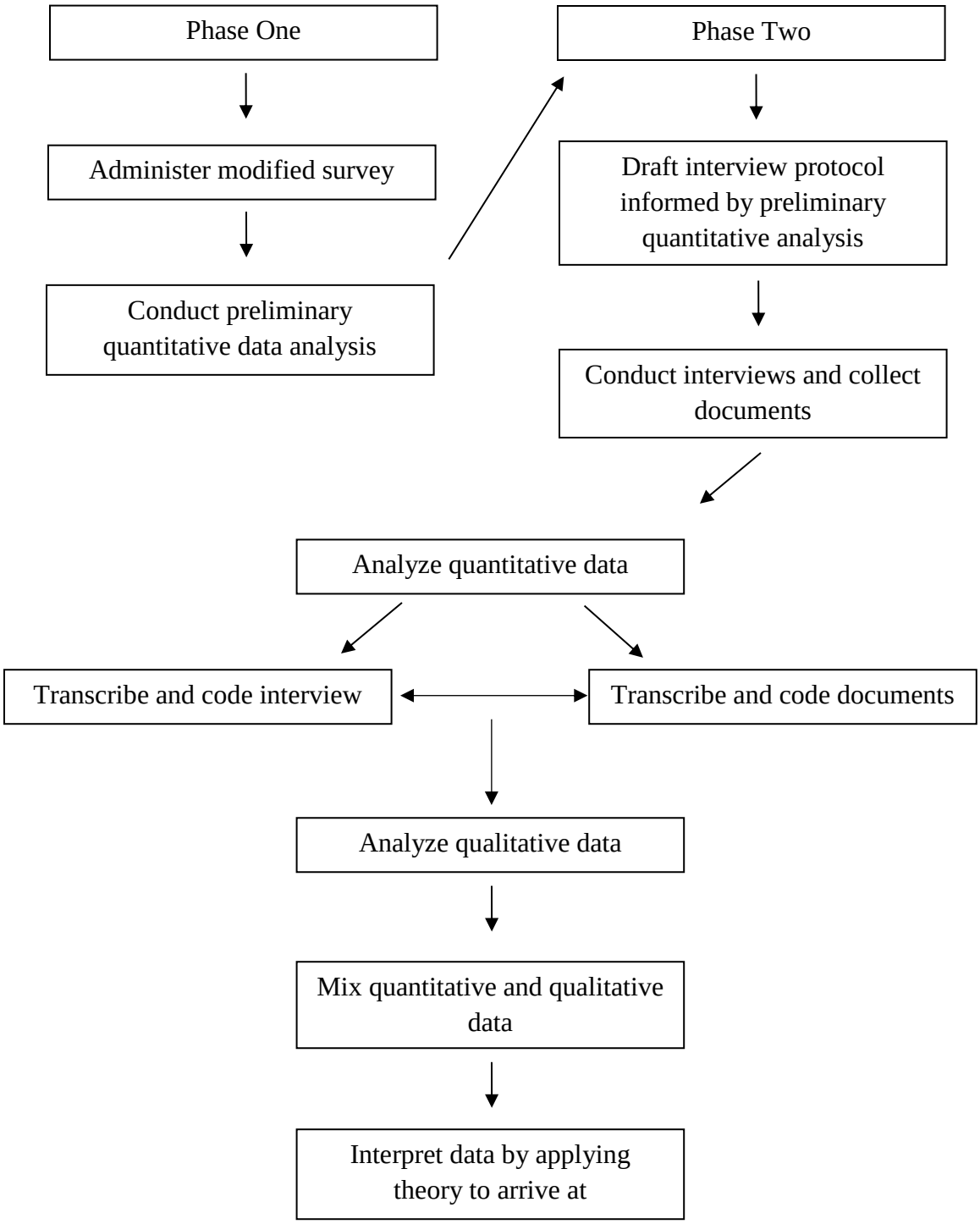

Figure 3.1. Data collection and analysis procedures used in the study.

Role of the Researcher and Ethical Considerations

For exploratory research, the experiences or expressions of the participants are central to understanding the group, process, or activity under study and the researcher aims to interpret and make meaning of these. As a result, the researcher is an instrument in exploratory research. The interpretation of the researcher is limited to the particular behavior examined in a particular context, and further described in terms of what an individual participant experiences or expresses. These experiences and expressions are conveyed in the form of rich or thick description with an understanding of the context of the system. An understanding of the context increases understanding of the group, process, or activity under study.

The researcher is an employee at one of the colleges within KCTCS. Though this role permitted insider knowledge of the organization and access to the site, participants, and documents, several measures were used to reduce researcher bias. These measures included acknowledging possible biases and developing a plan for handling them (Maxwell, 2013). The researcher cannot ignore her experiences in relation to system explored in this study as this could threaten credibility and trustworthiness with the participants. For this reason, the role of the researcher as an employee at one of the colleges was used as part of the inquiry process. In this way, the researcher maintained awareness of these experiences throughout data collection and analysis but did not let them consume the research objective.

Despite the role of the researcher as an employee at one of the colleges, the researcher maintained professional and ethical standards throughout all phases of the study. The participants were informed of the purpose of the study, their rights and

conditions of participation, as well as any risks or benefits associated with participation in this study. Participants were given the right to choose whether or not to participate in all, part, or none of the study, as well as the freedom to stop participation at any point.

Participants

Because this study explored presidential decision making in KCTCS, the available participants for this study consisted of the KCTCS president and presidents of each of the 16 colleges, including the following: Ashland Community and Technical College; Big Sandy Community and Technical College; Bluegrass Community and Technical College; Elizabethtown Community and Technical College; Gateway Community and Technical College; Hazard Community and Technical College; Henderson Community College; Hopkinsville Community College; Jefferson Community and Technical College; Madisonville Community College; Maysville Community and Technical College; Owensboro Community and Technical College; Somerset Community College; Southcentral Community and Technical College; Southeast Community and Technical College; West Kentucky Community and Technical College. At the time of participant solicitation, the KCTCS President was male, and of the 16 college presidents, 7 were male and 9 were female. In addition, at the time of participant solicitation, two possible participants were interim presidents and another two possible participants announced their retirement.

Each person solicited for participation in the study had the options of consenting to participate in all, part, or none of the study. Persons who elected to participate in the study could withdraw from participation at any point before or during the study. Though the study includes the name of the system, the participants were not named. Because the

survey did not ask participants to identify their role in the system as either the KCTCS president, a college president, or an interim college president, participant survey responses were anonymous. Reasonable and appropriate data collection and analysis procedures, including reporting data in aggregate, coding and the use of pseudonyms, were used to protect the identities of participants as well as any people or places revealed by participants during interviews.

Participating presidents varied in their length of tenure in the system. Participants were representative of both male and female presidents. Specifically, 4 male and 2 female presidents participated in phase one, and 2 males and 1 female participated in phase two. though a male pseudonym was assigned to each of the presidents interviewed in phase two. College presidents participating in this study were from urban and rural colleges within the system.

Participant Solicitation and Informed Consent

Participation was solicited via an email to the system email account for the system president and each of the college presidents requesting their participation in the study. The email explained the purpose of the study and asked them to complete and submit an electronic consent form if they were willing to participant in all or part of the study. The consent form asked them to identify whether they consent to participate in only phase one, only phase two, or both phase one and phase two of the study. Participants were instructed to input their electronic signature, save the file, and then reply to the solicitation email by attaching the completed consent form. The solicitation email and consent form are included in the appendices.

The initial solicitation email was sent to the system president and college presidents on in early March 2016 with a specified reply date. A reminder email with the same content and requests was sent one day prior to the specified reply date. Following the reminder email, four participants had replied. Those not replying by the specified reply date received a second reminder email with the same content and request. Following the second reminder email, two additional participants had replied for a total of six participants.

In early March 2016, the researcher contacted by phone the executive assistants for the participants that had not yet replied by the specified reply date. The researcher explained the purpose of the call and asked for assistance in obtaining a response. In some cases, the researcher sent the solicitation email to the executive assistants at their request. A third reminder email was sent in the middle of March 2016 to participants that had not yet replied.

During participant solicitation, the researcher asked participating presidents to help her by encouraging their colleagues to participate in the study. This resulted in one additional survey participant and one additional interview participant. Of the 17 possible participants for this study, 6 participants consented to participate in phase one of the study, which represents a response rate of 35% for the survey. Additionally, 3 participants consented to participate in phase two of the study. Only those willing to participate received further communication about the study. All participants consenting to participate did participate.

Data Sources

Because this study aimed to explore presidential decision making in KCTCS, data were obtained from participants in the form of surveys and interviews. The modified survey used in phase one of this study is located in Appendix G. The interview protocols developed for the system president and college presidents and used in phase two are located in Appendix I and Appendix J. In addition to the survey and interviews, documents aided in informing and confirming interview coding, buttressed quantitative and qualitative analysis, and further aided in developing theory to explain presidential decision making in the system. To maintain confidentiality, the researcher has withheld a list of documents collected and analyzed for this study but a description of the types of documents collected and analyzed is outlined in the section on document collection.

All data were stored according to suggestions outlined by Creswell (2013). These suggestions include creating back-up files for all interview recordings and transcriptions, as well as interview notes and documents. All paper materials related to the study were stored in a locked box only accessible by the researcher.

Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis

Quantitative data were collected during phase one of the study through the administration of a modified version of a survey instrument used by Ingram and Tollefson (1996). The modified instrument examined the location of decision making within the system for specified academic, administrative, and personnel decisions. The survey was administered electronically using Qualtrics software to the participants consenting to participate in this phase of the study. The researcher conducted preliminary

analysis of survey data to inform development of the interview protocol. Following qualitative data collection, survey data were analyzed to calculate descriptive statistics.

Survey Instrument

The survey was a modified version of the survey instrument used by Ingram and Tollefson (1996) to collect data on the location of decision making in state community college systems for specified academic, administrative, and personnel decision areas. They administered the survey to chief executive officers at 49 state community college systems with a total response rate of 83.7% of the total population. Using a modified Delphi technique, Ingram and Tollefson used an expert panel of current and former presidents of community colleges and former chief executives of state community colleges to validate the survey items.

After permission was obtained to adapt and use the survey instrument, several minor modifications were made. Two items ("determining course content and objectives" and "determining education techniques and strategies") were removed because curricular decision making is not within the scope of decision making identified for this study. Additional modifications included changing the words in one item to more accurately reflect decision making in a single community college system as opposed to a large sample of state community colleges systems. Specifically, one item ("appointing senior campus administrators [including presidents]") was changed to "appointing senior college administrators (including vice presidents)." For KCTCS, campuses were referred to as colleges, so the word "campus" was changed to "college" to provide better clarification for the participants. Also, college presidents within the system cannot

appoint themselves; though, the KCTCS president and college presidents may be involved in decision making for appointing vice presidents.

In addition, four items were added. Specifically, one item ("defining the mission, purpose, goals and objectives of the system") was added as an extension of the item "defining the mission, purpose, goals and objectives of individual colleges" included in the original instrument. Also, one item ("determining administrator or staff salary schedules") was added as an extension of the item "determining faculty salary schedules" that is listed in the original instrument. Two items ("determining system-level budgeting" and "determining college-level budgeting") were added to the instrument to more accurately reflect administrative decision making related to system and college budgets.

The product of these modifications to the instrument was the removal of three items, one of which was removed following administration of the survey, the addition of four items, and word changes to one item. The final instrument administered to participants included thirty-eight items reflecting types of decisions related to the categories of academic, administrative, and personnel decisions. Of the 38 items, 11 were categorized as academic, 17 were coded as administrative, and 10 were coded as personnel related decisions. Table 3.2 outlines the category of items as belonging to either the academic, administrative, or personnel decision making areas. Survey participants used a five-category, modified Likert scale that included a range of possible values for whether the survey item, framed as a type of decision, occurs at the local college or the system. All survey items required a response.

Table 3.2

Survey Items Forming Decision Areas

Decision Area	Survey Item
Academic	Items: 1, 12, 13, 14, 15, 22, 23, 29, 30, 32, 33
Administrative	Items: 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 19, 20, 21, 24, 28, 31, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38
Personnel	Items: 2, 4, 5, 10, 16, 17, 18, 25, 26, 27

Following administration of the survey to participants, one participant notified the researcher that one item was not applicable to the system. The item was not removed from the survey because the survey had already been administered to participants; however, the one item ("negotiating with faculty unions in collective bargaining") was removed prior to analysis. Survey data used for analysis included 37 of the original 38 items as a result of the removal of one personnel decision related item. So, analysis reflected responses to 37 items, 11 of which were coded as academic, 17 of which were coded as administrative, and 9 of which were coded as personnel.

According to Creswell (2009), using an existing instrument involves reporting the established validity and discussing whether scores resulting from past use of the instrument demonstrate reliability. Ingram and Tollefson (1996) obtained face validity of the instrument by comparing survey items with examples of decisions described in the literature. Furthermore, they used a modified Delphi technique in which an expert panel validated the importance of governance of a community college of the survey items. The six panel members included current and former presidents of community colleges, as well

as former chief executives of a state community college systems. Using a five-category Likert scale, panel members rated the importance of each item.

Ingram and Tollefson (1996) calculated mean ratings for each item, which then served as its assigned value. The overall mean value of items was then compared to the assigned mean value for each item. Of the 37 survey items, the panel responses validated the importance of 36 items. Furthermore, the mean values for each category of decisions were calculated to determine whether panel members assigned different levels of significance to the different categories of academic, administrative, and personnel decisions. Ingram and Tollefson conducted a Kruskal-Wallis analysis of variance to test the null hypothesis that there is no difference in importance among the academic, administrative, and personnel decision categories. The result of this test indicated that it cannot be assumed that the expert panel viewed any decision category as more important in the operation of community colleges than any of the other categories.

Quantitative Data Collection

An email generated through Qualtrics software was sent to the campus email addresses of these participants in late March 2016. The email explained the purpose of the study, provided a description of the survey, explained procedures used to ensure confidentiality, indicated how long the survey will take to complete, and indicated that completion of the survey indicated voluntary consent to participate in this phase of the study. The email also contained the link to the survey with a requested completion date in late March 2016.

Following the initial survey solicitation email and one reminder email, 5 participants had completed the survey. After completing quantitative data collection and

commencement of qualitative data collection, the researcher received consent from 1 additional participant for phase one of the study. The survey email was sent to this participant in early May 2016. As a result, preliminary analysis reflects survey data from 5 participants. The researcher calculated descriptive statistics for survey data from all 6 participants.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Survey data were intended to identify the location of decision making for specified academic, administrative, and personnel decisions as outlined in the research questions guiding this study. Also, survey data were intended to inform the development of a semi-structured interview protocol because there are two, sequential phases to this study.

Preliminary analysis. Following administration and completion of the survey, survey data were downloaded from Qualtrics for preliminary analysis. Preliminary analysis involved calculating the number of participant responses along the scale for each of the decision items in table format, with 5 being the highest number of responses and 0 being the lowest number of responses across the scale. This illustrated where the majority of participants perceived decision making occurs for each decision item.

In addition, the researcher calculated the total number of participant responses along the scale for all decision items, which provided an overview of the dispersion of participant responses across the scale. Then, the researcher sorted the total number of participant responses along the scale by the academic, administrative, and personnel categories, which provided an overview of the dispersion of participant responses by decision category examined in this study.

Descriptive statistics. The researcher calculated descriptive statistics following the analysis plan used by Ingram and Tollefson (1996), which included analyzing frequencies and calculating measures of central tendency and measures of dispersion. Because the survey used a five-category, modified Likert scale, the data were assigned a numerical value. Table 3.3 outlines the range of possible values and assigned numerical values.

Table 3.3

Range of Possible Values for Location of Decision Making

Scale	Value
The local college	-1
Primarily the college, with some input from the state community college system	-0.5
Shared equally between the college and the state system	0
Primarily the state system, with some input from the colleges	+0.5
The state system	+1

Descriptive statistics involved analyzing frequencies at the decision-area and decision-item levels, as well as total frequencies for the scale. In addition, the researcher calculated the overall mean and the means by decision areas, as well as the range. The researcher analyzed frequencies to assess the degree to which decisions within the academic, administrative, and personnel decision areas occur at the local community college; primarily at the college, with some input from the state community college

system; are shared equally between the college and the state system; primarily the state system, with some input from the college; or, the state system.

Specifically, frequencies were analyzed for each decision item response to assess the degree to which decision making was perceived to occur at the locations indicated on the scale. A total frequency was calculated and analyzed for all items according to the scale, along with subtotals for the academic, administrative, and personnel decision areas to determine if there were differences in the perceived location of academic, administrative, and personnel decision making.

In addition, the researcher calculated the mean value for participant responses for the decision items asked about on the survey as well as a mean value for the overall location of decision making. Because numerical values were assigned to the response scale of where decision making occurs within the community college system, a mean value was calculated for each survey item to determine the degree to which decision making for each decision item is perceived to occur at the locations indicated on the scale. The total range of possible mean values was -1 to +1. A total mean value for the dataset was calculated along with subtotals for the academic, administrative, and personnel decision areas to determine if there were differences in the perceived location of decision making for these areas. Finally, the researcher calculated the range to determine whether there was dispersion in participant responses across the scale.

Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis

The purpose of phase two of the study was exploratory in nature and aimed to understand how the presidents share decision making. Qualitative data were collected through interviews and documents. Interviews were transcribed and coded. During

interview data collection and transcription, the researcher also collected documents. As previously explained, interviews and documents were analyzed using an iterative process, which helped inform and confirm codes and emerging themes. Then, the researcher reintroduced quantitative findings into the analysis. With the reintroduction of quantitative data, interviews and documents were analyzed again to refine codes and emerging themes. Both quantitative and qualitative data were mixed for interpretation and analysis.

Interview Protocol

An interview protocol was used to collect data on how the KCTCS president and college presidents share academic, administrative, and personnel decisions. Because data collection occurred in two phases, preliminary analysis of the survey administered in the first phase of the study was used to develop the interview protocol used in the second phase of the study. Specifically, data from phase one of the study was used to identify areas where decision making was perceived to be shared between the KCTCS president and college presidents. Moreover, the data revealed that there were some areas of dispersion in participant responses, so some of these decisions were included in the interview protocol for further exploration. The purpose of the interviews was to further explore their experiences of negotiating shared decision making between the system and colleges in the areas presidents in phase one said shared decision making occurs in KCTCS.

Additional research questions helped guide this study and aided in exploring presidential decision making in the community college system. These questions attended to the particular contextual and situational factors relevant to presidential decision

making based on the review of literature. For this reason, the researcher included interview questions pertaining to the third and fourth research questions of this study to explore how specific state contexts influence, as well as what the role of the KCTCS Board of Regents and college boards of directors is in decision making.

A semi-structured interview protocol permitted flexibility in exploring presidential decision making in a community college system because knowledge was limited. Also, a semi-structured interview protocol permitted the researcher to use and respond to the data gathered from the survey administered in phase one of the study, and thus garner a better understanding of presidential decision making. Merriam (1988) refers to different kinds of questions that can be used to gather different types of information from participants. Because the purpose of the interviews was to explore shared decision making between the KCTCS president and college presidents, the focus of the interviews was the experiences and behaviors of participants. The researcher also asked participants about internal and external influences on decision making, including the role of the KCTCS Board of Regents and college boards of directors in decision making, as well as the role of the legislature and CPE. Furthermore, in order to explore how shared decision making was negotiated within the system, the protocol was designed to include examples of decisions and hypothetical situations related to decision making for participants. The rationale for including these types of questions was to better understand the decision making process for shared academic, administrative, and personnel decisions.

The final product was a semi-structured interview protocol comprised of 22 questions. Of the 22 questions, 11 questions explored how the KCTCS president and college presidents share academic, administrative, and personnel decision making. Of

these 11 questions, 2 questions addressed academic decision making, 4 questions addressed administrative decision making, and 5 questions addressed personnel decision making. More specifically, 2 of the 5 personnel related questions were examples of decisions and hypothetical situations related to decision making for participants. Furthermore, of the 22 total questions, 6 questions explored how internal and external agencies influenced academic, administrative, and personnel decision making, which answered the third research question guiding this study. Finally, of the 22 questions, 5 questions explored the role of the KCTCS Board of Regents and college boards of directors in academic, administrative, and personnel decision making, which answered the fourth research question guiding this study.

Qualitative Data Collection

The interview solicitation email was sent in late March 2016 to the participants who indicated they were willing to participate in phase two of the study. The researcher sent three reminder emails. Following a third reminder email, one participant had replied and an interview date and time was scheduled. Then, the researcher contacted the executive assistant of the second consenting participant. The researcher spoke to the participant via phone and an interview date and time was scheduled. Following commencement of qualitative data collection, the researcher received consent from one additional participant for phase two of the study as a result of study participants helping encourage his or her colleagues to participate. The interview email was sent to this participant in early May 2016.

All participants, including the participant that agreed to be interviewed after qualitative data collection had already begun, indicated they were willing to be

interviewed using either of the three format. For participants that indicated they are willing to be interviewed via all three provided formats, the researcher selected either in-person or video-conferencing based on the geographic proximity of participants to the physical location of the researcher. An in-person interview was conducted with one participant; however, the geographic proximity of the two additional participants meant that video-conferencing was used. While not an in-person interview, the video-conferencing format allowed the researcher to observe and record the participant's demeanor and nonverbal cues. There were technical problems related to the video feed of the participant's webcam during one of the two video-conferencing interviews. So, the participant could see and hear the researcher, but the researcher could only hear the participant. For this reason, only one of the two video-conferencing interviews allowed the researcher to observe and record the participant's demeanor and nonverbal cues.

Using an interview guide, the researcher reviewed the purpose of the study, the consent form, noting confidentiality, the use of pseudonyms to protect identities, and that interviews would be audio-recorded. In addition, the researcher outlined the interview process by explaining that the interview questions were open-ended so that participants could provide open responses. Also, the researcher explained that she may ask clarifying questions if needed and that she would be taking notes during the interview. Following this explanation, the researcher asked for verbal permission to begin recording and began with the interview protocol.

All interviews were digitally recorded to provide a complete record of what was discussed. The researcher recorded the date and time of the interview. Interviews were recorded with no personal names except for an assigned pseudonym of "president" if

needed. In addition, the researcher took field notes during interviews to record the participant's demeanor and nonverbal cues in order to connect these with specific questions. Following the interview, the researcher asked participants to help increase participation by encouraging his or her colleagues to participate.

Document collection. During interview data collection and transcription, the researcher was collecting documents from multiple online sources. The researcher used documents to further explore presidential decision making in KCTCS. According to Merriam (1988), documents help capture data beyond participant narratives to further triangulate data. The researcher gathered both internal and external documents pertinent to study. Internal documents refer to those created by and for the system and colleges, whereas external documents are those created by a third party and reference the system and colleges or are written about the system and colleges. These documents included the following categories: Kentucky Revised Statutes pertaining to KCTCS; Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) organizational chart and strategic agenda; KCTCS organizational chart, strategic plan, and policies; college organizational charts, policies, and resource manuals; KCTCS Board of Regents bylaws and policies; and, college boards of director's bylaws and minutes.

All documents were accessed electronically in a number of ways. The researcher reviewed multiple websites and downloaded or printed relevant documents. Specifically, the researcher accessed websites for the system and colleges, the Council on Postsecondary Education, Kentucky revised statutes, and Kentucky Chamber of Commerce. The researcher also logged into a system wide SharePoint site and retrieved business procedures and other related documents not readily accessible via the system or

college websites. Documents originating from the system and colleges provided an understanding of the policies, procedures, and rules that inform decision making, as well as outlined the roles and responsibilities of various groups of people.

In addition, the Council on Postsecondary Education website provided access to state policies, initiatives, and strategic plans, and data and research reports for Kentucky postsecondary education, among other documents. Moreover, Kentucky revised statutes were first posted online in 1996 and have been updated after each legislative session since that year. The Kentucky revised statutes provided a rich historical context and understanding of the system since it was created as an act of legislation in 1997. Also, the revised statutes provided clarification on the roles, responsibilities, and authority of various groups of people, including state legislators, the Council on Postsecondary Education, and the Board of Regents and boards of directors. Additional reports retrieved from the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce provided concise reports on the state legislative agendas each year, as well as a 2007 and 2016 status report on postsecondary education reform and progress following the legislation in 1997 that created KCTCS and transferred governance of the University of Kentucky Community Colleges and the state Workforce Development technical institutes. Altogether, these documents served as an additional source of information and data on understanding the system, colleges, and state contexts influencing decision making.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Following interviews and document collection, final quantitative analysis was conducted. The researcher read and coded interview data and documents, using documents to provide deeper understanding, answer clarifying questions generated from

coding, and to confirm, inform, and shape interview data coding. Following qualitative analysis of interviews and documents, quantitative data were reintroduced to refine emerging codes and themes. At that point, both quantitative and qualitative data were combined for interpretation and analysis.

Interview data analysis. Using the interview protocol, all digital recordings of interviews were transcribed by the researcher. Since the interviews were semi-structured, follow-up questions and responses were transcribed for those records. Because a digital recorder was used, the researcher used digital pitch control to adjust the speed of the recording. This allowed the researcher to more accurately transcribe the recording. The researcher also used pause, rewind, and repeat features during transcription to maximize accuracy.

Because participants were promised confidentiality, pseudonyms were used throughout the transcript for people and places that could reveal the identity of any of the participants or other people or places they named in their responses. Ellipses were used to denote pauses in responses and asterisks were used to denote words or phrases that were not clear or could not ascertained. Bolded text was used for words or phrases spoken with emphasis. Following the initial transcription, all digital recordings were played two additional times while reading the final transcript to ensure accuracy. Once the researcher confirmed accuracy of the transcript, any field notes taken during the interview were added to the transcript. These notes helped assess the quality of the data obtained through interviews, which Merriam (1988) suggests is important for interview data analysis. For any field notes indicating personal demeanor, nonverbal cues, or physical expressions, such as hand quotation marks, the researcher attributed those to specific phrases, words,

or questions. These notes, along with the interview transcripts, helped assess the quality of the data obtained through interviews.

Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) suggest that qualitative analysis begins with coding the data. Coding involves "grouping evidence and labeling ideas so that they reflect increasingly broader perspectives" (p. 132). So, data were grouped into codes, and then codes were grouped into broader themes. Themes can also be grouped into even larger dimensions or perspectives as they are related or compared to one another. For this reason, interview data analysis mimicked an iterative process involving reading and coding, followed by a categorical aggregation of themes emerging from the codes. In this way, the researcher has "...observed a sufficient number of occurrences of an event, process, or activity to constitute grounds for a valid generalization" (Stebbins, 2001). Though an issue or concept identified from the data may align with presidential decision making, the meaning of the issue did not yield qualitative weight unless additional instances of the same issue or concept emerged from the data.

Interview transcripts were compiled into a single file, and as suggested by Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), codes were recorded in the left margin and broader themes were recorded in the right margin. The researcher read and coded interview data. Following initial coding, the researcher compiled all codes and grouped similar codes together. Following the first round of interview coding, the researcher began reading documents in order to provide explanation, clarification, and context for interview data.

Using the grouped codes developed from the first round of interview coding, the researcher read and coded interview data a second time to further refine codes and identify emerging themes. Following the second round of interview coding, the

researcher continued to group codes, noting the frequency of specific codes and again, continued reading documents. Also, because the purpose of interviews was to further explore how the KCTCS president and college presidents share academic, administrative, and personnel decision making, as well as explore how external state influences on this decision making and what the role of the KCTCS Board of Regents and boards of directors is in decision making, the researcher grouped codes by decision area and by research question following the second round of coding.

The researcher used the refined and grouped codes by decision area and research question from the second round of interview coding to further explore particular issues and concepts that could be identified as emerging themes. By framing the codes by decision area and research question, the researcher could more clearly identify themes that emerged from the data cumulatively, but also themes that emerged according to sets of interview questions and their corresponding research questions. Following the second round of interview coding, the researcher continued reading documents in order to provide explanation, clarification, and context for interview data, as well as to refine codes and themes.

Using the refined and grouped codes by decision area and research question, the researcher conducted a third round of coding. The purpose of this round of interview coding was to further hone emerging themes, ascribing particular language to effectively describe them and examining relationships between themes. The researcher read and reviewed documents throughout interview data analysis. This simultaneous approach to interview and document analysis involved an iterative process of reading and coding interview data, followed by reading and coding documents, and then returning to reading

and coding interview data again. Naturally, the codes identified through interview analysis were applied to document analysis, though the data were not yet mixed for interpretation.

Document analysis. Merriam (1988) highlights that determining the authenticity and accuracy of documents is part of the research process. This involves determining the reasons for which the document was produced, how content may be biased or distorted, how the document was originally used or for what reasons the document was originally intended, and whether its selection is biased. The documents gathered for the purposes of this study provided insight into presidential decision making in KCTCS. The guidelines provided by Merriam and outlined above were used in the selection of documents reviewed for this study.

Documents obtained electronically via websites for the system and colleges, the Council on Postsecondary Education, Kentucky revised statutes, and the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce that were relevant to presidential decision making in KCTCS were analyzed. The researcher organized and prioritized documents as primary and secondary documents. Documents written by the system and for the system were labeled as primary documents because these documents more directly informed decision making. Documents written about the system, such as news articles and status reports, were labeled as secondary documents.

During interview coding, the research read and coded documents, beginning with primary documents. Codes and emerging themes identified from interview data analysis were used as a guide for analyzing documents. Following the reading and coding of documents, the researcher confirmed and refined codes as needed. Likewise, emerging

themes identified through interview analysis were applied to additional readings of documents to gather additional evidence and provide explanation.

Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis

Triangulation of the three data sources was accomplished by examining evidence from surveys, interviews, and documents to build coherent themes related to presidential decision making within the system. Following coding and analysis of interview transcripts and documents, the researcher reintroduced quantitative findings into the analysis. Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) suggest that mixing quantitative and qualitative data provides the researcher a better understanding of the phenomenon than if only quantitative or qualitative data were used. The reintroduction of quantitative data aided in confirming or disconfirming codes and emerging themes identified in the interview transcripts and documents. Moreover, since survey data were used to develop the interview protocol, the reintroduction of survey data into the interpretation of qualitative data was warranted to provide a more complete picture of presidential decision making in KCTCS. With the reintroduction of quantitative data, interviews and documents were analyzed again to refine codes and emerging themes. Alongside this second analysis of qualitative data using survey data, the researcher looked for evidence that might contradict previously established codes and themes.

Validity and Reliability

Multiple data collection procedures, including both quantitative and qualitative, aided in reducing threats to validity, especially considering the small sample size. Likewise, collecting data from the system president and college presidents facilitates a

comparison of presidential decision making from multiple perspectives that can highlight rival explanations.

Quantitative Validity and Reliability

The survey instrument that Ingram and Tollefson (1996) used was based on a list of 39 decisions classified as either academic, administrative, or personnel in nature by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. The commission considered the list of decisions to be representative of key policy areas in higher education governance based on a study conducted in 1982. Ingram and Tollefson obtained face validity of the instrument by comparing survey items with examples of decisions described in the literature. Furthermore, they used a modified Delphi technique in which an expert panel validated the importance of the items on the survey instrument to community college governance. The six panel members included current and former presidents of community colleges, as well as former chief executives of a state community college systems. Using a five-category Likert scale, panel members rated the importance of each item to community college governance.

Ingram and Tollefson (1996) calculated mean ratings for each item, which then served as its assigned value. The overall mean value of items was then compared to the assigned mean value for each item. Of the 37 survey items, the panel responses validated the importance of 36 items. Furthermore, the mean values for each category of decisions were calculated to determine whether panel members assigned different levels of significance to the different categories of academic, administrative, and personnel decisions. Ingram and Tollefson conducted a Kruskal-Wallis analysis of variance to test the null hypothesis that there is no difference in importance among the academic,

administrative, and personnel decision categories. The result of this test indicated that it cannot be assumed that the expert panel viewed any decision category as more important in the operation of community colleges than any of the other categories. Based on the use of an expert panel and an analysis of variance to determine whether certain types of decisions were relatively more important in the operation of community colleges that were other types of decisions, Ingram and Tollefson established validity and reliability of the survey instrument. For this reason, selection and use of the instrument was appropriate for this study.

Qualitative Validity and Reliability

Stebbins (2001) outlines three problems for validity in exploratory research. These include: (a) reactive effects of the presence of the observer on the central subject of the study; (b) personal bias and selective perception and interpretation of the observer; and, (c) limitations on the ability of the observer to witness all aspects of the central subject of the study. Given these problems to validity and the methods employed in this exploratory study, the researcher looked for evidence that might contradict or refute identified codes and emerging themes throughout all stages of data analysis following collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. In addition, the researcher constantly assessed whether there was a sufficient number of instances of an event, process, or activity to make a valid generalization. Still, as Stebbins (2001) notes, the most effective way to ensure validity in exploratory research is to build upon inductively generated theory using a research process in the area of inquiry.

Maxwell (2013) points to triangulation as a strategy for dealing with threats to validity. For the purposes of this study, multiple sources of evidence were collected to aid

in triangulation. In addition, data analysis involved matching patterns across multiple forms of acquired data to enhance internal validity. Emerging themes were identified based on a careful review and synthesis of all forms of data collected and analyzed. Furthermore, theory was used to explain presidential decision making in KCTCS. Finally, the researcher protected the reliability of the results by using prescribed data collection instruments that minimize error and bias.

Summary

As an exploratory study, the researcher used both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis procedures to examine presidential decision making in KCTCS. A survey was administered to 6 consenting participants in phase one of the study. Preliminary survey analysis was conducted to inform the development of a semi-structured interview protocol. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with 3 consenting participants in phase two of the study.

The goal of exploratory research is the production of generalizations about the phenomenon that are derived from the data through a process of induction (Stebbins, 2001). Final survey analysis was conducted to calculate descriptive statistics, followed by interview data transcription and coding. The researcher gathered documents during interview data transcription. During coding, evidence from documents was used to build an understanding of presidential decision making within KCTCS, and to further refine codes and themes emerging from interview data.

As an exploratory study using inductive reasoning, findings were developed through an analysis of participant responses to a survey and interview, as well as through documents, which enabled the researcher to arrive at her own interpretations and

generalizations about the central subject of the study, but which also echoed the perceptions and voices of participants as they described their reality.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this exploratory study was to explore presidential decision making in KCTCS by examining the location of decision making in the system and how presidential decision making is shared between the KCTCS president and college presidents for academic, administrative, and personnel decision areas.

The first phase of this study used quantitative procedures to examine the location of decision making in the system in order to answer the first research question. Survey data showing areas where decision making was shared between the system and colleges, as well as decision items for which participants perceived differently the location of decision making, were used to develop a semi-structured interview protocol used in the second phase of the study. The second phase explored shared decision making involving the KCTCS president and college presidents in areas where phase one study results indicated decision making was shared between the system and colleges. The following two primary research questions guided the study:

1. What is the location of decision making in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System for specified academic, administrative, and personnel decisions?
2. How do the KCTCS president and college presidents in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System share academic, administrative, and personnel decisions for the system and colleges?

Additional questions helped guide the study and aided in exploring presidential decision making in the system. These questions attend to particular contextual and

situational factors relevant to presidential decision making based on the review of literature.

3. How do the state economic, political, or social contexts influence academic, administrative, and personnel decision making within the community college system?
4. What roles do the KCTCS Board of Regents and college boards of directors play in system-level and college-level decision making?

As an exploratory study, the researcher used an inductive approach to inquiry in analyzing surveys, interviews, and documents. The researcher conducted descriptive statistics, including frequencies, means, and the range. Descriptive statistics allowed the researcher to assess the degree to which decisions within the academic, administrative, and personnel decision areas occur at the local community college; primarily at the college, with some input from the state community college system; are shared equally between the college and the state system; primarily the state system, with some input from the college; or, the state system.

Qualitative data were collected through interviews with participants consenting to participate in phase two of the study and through documents. The researcher transcribed interview data and collected documents. The researcher coded interview data through an iterative process of reading and coding, followed by a categorical aggregation of codes and emerging themes. During coding, the researcher read documents to provide deeper understanding, answer clarifying questions generated from coding, and to confirm, inform, and shape interview data coding.

Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) suggest that mixing quantitative and qualitative data provides the researcher a better understanding of the phenomenon than if only quantitative or qualitative data were used. Following qualitative analysis of interviews and documents, quantitative data were reintroduced to refine codes and emerging themes. At that point, both quantitative and qualitative data were combined for analysis and interpretation.

This chapter will provide a description of the Kentucky Community and Technical College System to help contextualize findings of this study. In addition, this chapter will describe in detail the findings of quantitative and qualitative analyses. The major sections of this chapter include an overview of the system, as well as quantitative and qualitative findings separated by research question.

Description of the System

KCTCS was created as a result of the Kentucky Postsecondary Education Improvement Act of 1997. KCTCS is governed by the Council on Postsecondary Education, the state coordinating board for postsecondary education, and a Board of Regents. KCTCS is located in Versailles, Kentucky and is comprised of 16 colleges and more than 70 campuses in various urban, suburban, and rural locations throughout the state. The largest number of campuses belonging to a college is 6, with 2 being the fewest number of campuses belonging to a college. The average number of campuses for a college is 4.

KCTCS awards certificates, diplomas, and two-year associate degrees in 700 programs. KCTCS also provides workforce training for businesses in Kentucky. Two colleges – Bluegrass Community and Technical College and Jefferson Community and

Technical College – enrolled the largest numbers of students and awarded the largest numbers of credentials in 2014-15 (Kentucky Community and Technical College System, 2015).

The past president served as the founding president of KCTCS for 16 years and retired in January 2015. The current KCTCS president served as the KCTCS Chancellor and is a past president of Hazard Community and Technical College. The KCTCS president's cabinet includes the KCTCS president, four vice presidents, and one chancellor for academic affairs. The KCTCS president's leadership team includes the KCTCS president, the cabinet members, and the 16 college presidents. Leadership at each of the colleges consists of a college president, a chair for the board of directors, and a chair for the college foundation.

Quantitative Results

The researcher analyzed response counts, frequencies, and calculated descriptive statistics from phase one survey data. These included frequencies, means, and the range. Following administration of the survey to participants, one participant notified the researcher stating that one item was not applicable to the system. The item was not removed from the survey because the survey had already been administered to participants; however, the item ("negotiating with faculty unions in collective bargaining") was removed prior to both stages of analysis.

Descriptive Statistics

The researcher examined frequencies of participant responses for each survey item. A total of 222 observations were made in this study (37 items for each of 6 different participants out of a total of 6 participants in phase one and 3 participants in phase two of

this study). The total number of responses were calculated for the scale. Frequencies were examined at the decision-area and decision-item levels. Frequencies of participant responses were also examined for the dataset as a whole. Measures of central tendency, including an overall mean and mean values by decision area were calculated. Finally, the range was calculated based on the dispersion of participant responses noted in frequency analyses.

Academic decision making. Analysis of the overall frequency of participant responses for academic decision items illustrated that responses were dispersed across the scale. As such, there was disagreement among participants about the location of academic decision items asked about on the survey. This was reflected in differences in participant responses noted at the decision-item level. Table 4.1 contains the frequency of participant responses for academic decisions.

Table 4.1

Frequency of Participant Responses for Academic Decisions

Academic Decision Item	Local College	Primarily the college, with some input from the system	Shared equally between the college and system	Primarily the system, with some input from the college	State system
Adding or discontinuing an academic department of division at a college	1	3	1	1	0

Table 4.1 (continued)

Deciding content for self-study for regional accreditation	4	2	0	0	0
Deciding whether to seek accreditation for programs	3	3	0	0	0
Defining the mission, purpose, goals, ad objectives of the system	0	0	2	4	0
Defining the mission, purpose, goals, and objectives of individual colleges	1	4	1	0	0
Establishing faculty teaching loads	1	1	1	2	1
Establishing new programs at individual colleges	2	2	2	0	0

Table 4.1 (continued)

Reviewing and eliminating existing programs at individual colleges	2	4	0	0	0
Setting admissions standards at individual colleges	0	0	3	2	1
Setting degree requirements	0	1	3	1	1
Setting student-faculty ratios within programs or departments	4	2	0	0	0
Total frequency	18	22	13	10	3

In examining responses at the decision-item level, participant responses illustrated that the decision items "deciding content for self-study for regional accreditation," "deciding whether to seek accreditation for programs," "reviewing and eliminating existing programs at the college", and "setting student-faculty ratios within programs or departments" leaned toward the local college as the location of decision making. Whereas the item "reviewing and eliminating existing programs at the college" leaned toward the

local college, participant responses for the item "adding or discontinuing an academic department or division at a college" were dispersed across the scale. Given the scope of effect on personnel and governance structures of adding or discontinuing an academic department or division at a college, participants may have reasoned that this decision necessitated involvement of the system to some extent.

The item "establishing faculty teaching loads" was dispersed across the scale and further explored in phase two of this study. Phase two findings illustrated that the policy guiding decisions about teaching loads provided flexibility in decision making. Specifically, KCTCS Administrative Policies and Procedures 2.11 *Work Load* used words like "normal teaching load," "shall not exceed," and "maximum number of contact hours per week" (p. 140-41). The fact that participant responses were dispersed across the scale for this item suggested that presidents interpret and apply this policy differently.

While the items "setting admissions standards at the individual colleges" and "setting degree requirements" leaned toward the system as the location of decision making, half of participants responded that these two decision items were shared equally between the system and colleges. The item "setting admissions standards at the individual colleges" was explored in phase two of this study. Phase two findings illustrated that admissions standards were consistent across the colleges, and interview participants described the faculty governance structure as the location of decision making for setting admissions standards. Considering there is a KCTCS faculty senate at the system level as well as a faculty council at the college level, participants may have reasoned that these dual structures necessitated shared decision making.

Administrative decision making. Participant responses illustrated that administrative decision making was dispersed across the scale; however, administrative decision making leaned toward the local college more than academic and personnel decision making. Table 4.2 contains the frequency of participant responses for administrative decisions.

Table 4.2

Frequency of Participant Responses for Administrative Decisions

Decision Item	Local College	Primarily the college, with some input from the system	Shared equally between the college and system	Primarily the system, with some input from the college	State system
Allocating review to individual colleges from non-state resources	2	2	1	0	0
Approving budgets for departments at colleges	5	1	0	0	0
Approving purchases over $1,000	4	2	0	0	0
Assigning space and facilities to specific academic programs	5	1	0	0	0

Table 4.2 (continued)

Authorizing fundraising for capital improvements for specific colleges	1	3	2	0	0
Building or acquisition of a campus facility	0	2	3	1	0
Determining affirmative action targets for enrollment	0	1	3	2	0
Determining specific reductions required by mid-year budget cuts	2	3	1	0	0
Determining the use of year-end budget surpluses	4	2	0	0	0
Establishing or closing branch campuses	0	3	3	0	0
Offering courses and programs off campus	4	2	0	0	0

Table 4.2 (continued)

Setting enrollment levels for individual colleges	1	3	2	0	0
Setting tuition levels	0	0	0	1	5
Setting other student fees	0	0	1	1	4
Transferring more than $5,000 between budget categories	3	1	2	0	0
Determining system-level budgeting	0	0	2	2	2
Determining college-level budgeting	2	4	0	0	0
Total	33	30	20	7	11

In examining responses at the decision-item level, participants perceived that "approving budgets for departments at colleges," "approving purchases over $1,000," "transferring more than $5,000 between budget categories, "determining specific reductions required by mid-year budget cuts," "determining the use of year-end budget surpluses," and "determining college-level budgeting" lean toward the local college. The location of decision making for these budget-related administrative decisions can be

rationalized by the fact that each college maintained an operating budget separate from the system. In this regard, college presidents had discretion and decision making authority for how college funds were allocated.

Moreover, participants perceived that "setting tuition levels," "setting other student fees," and "determining system-level budgeting" lean toward the system. Although interview participants echoed that state allocations are made to the system and not to the individual colleges, interview participants described a shared decision making process for setting tuition levels. Moreover, document analysis confirmed that the KCTCS Board of Regents has ultimate authority for setting tuition levels and approving fees. Participants may have perceived that setting tuition occurred at the system because the KCTCS Board of Regents was more closely aligned to the system than to the colleges.

Furthermore, participants perceived that the items "establishing or closing branch campuses" and "building or acquisition of a campus facility" involved some level of shared decision making. When asked about the decision making process for establishing or closing a campus location, interview participants echoed the involvement of multiple stakeholders. Moreover, participants described a politically driven process because decision making concerning opening or closing a campus location hinged on funding and community investment. As such, survey participants may have perceived that establishing or closing a branch campus, or building or acquiring a campus facility was shared because these decisions involved budgets and funding.

Personnel decision making. Participant responses illustrated that personnel decision making leaned toward the local college and was more likely to occur at the local

college than at the system for the decision items asked about on the survey. Table 4.3 summarizes the frequency of participant responses for personnel decisions.

Table 4.3

Frequency of Participant Responses for Personnel Decisions

Decision Item	Local College	Primarily the college, with some input from the system	Shared equally between the college and system	Primarily the system, with some input from the college	State system
Adjudicating faculty grievances	1	3	2	0	0
Allocating vacant faculty positions among departments at individual colleges	6	0	0	0	0
Appointing senior college administrators (including vice presidents)	6	0	0	0	0
Authorizing out-of-state travel for faculty members	6	0	0	0	0
Determining faculty salary schedules	0	2	1	2	1

Table 4.3 (continued)

Determining administrator or staff salary schedules	0	1	2	2	1
Determining affirmative action targets for academic hiring	0	1	3	1	1
Granting faculty tenure or promotion	0	2	3	0	1
Hiring new faculty members	6	0	0	0	0
Total	25	9	11	5	4

Participants perceived that the items "allocating vacant faculty positions among departments at individual colleges," "appointing senior college administrators (including vice presidents)," "authorizing out-of-state travel for faculty members," and "hiring new faculty members" occurs exclusively at the local college. Although employees are employees of KCTCS and not the individual colleges, policy outlined that college presidents were responsible, without delegation, for appointments, and were also responsible for hiring all employees, which helped explain participant perceptions about the location of decision making for these decision items.

The items "determining faculty salary schedules" and "determining administrator or staff salary schedules" indicated that participants perceived differently the location of

decision making for these items. Both of these items were explored in phase two and what emerged from interviews and documents was a system-wide salary schedule according to faculty rank and administrator or staff band level. Moreover, policy indicated that college presidents were responsible, without delegation, for recommendations on salaries and salary changes. This dispersion in participant responses in the context of policy on salaries suggested that either presidents may have perceived the location of these decision items leaned toward the system because the policy is system driven. Moreover, participants may have perceived that the salary schedule was clear and flexible enough to permit application at the college level, and for this reason, participants perceived that decisions concerning faculty, administrator, and staff salary schedules to be more shared.

Moreover, participant responses for the item "granting faculty tenure or promotion" were somewhat dispersed but centered around shared decision making. This item was explored in phase two and interview and document analyses indicated that the tenure and promotion process involved a college faculty committee that reviews and recommends candidates to the college president, who then reviews and forwards recommendations to the KCTCS chancellor. A system faculty committee reviews and recommends candidates to the KCTCS president, who then reviews and forwards recommendations to the KCTCS Board of Regents.

The fact that the decision making process for granting faculty tenure or promotion involved both the KCTCS president and college president, as well as system and college level recommending committees, could explain why participant responses centered around shared decision making. However, some participants may have perceived that

granting faculty tenure or promotion occurs at the local college, with some input from the system because the colleges are the main instructional units of the system. Similarly, participants may have perceived that granting faculty tenure or promotion occurred at the system because the KCTCS presidents makes the final recommendation to the KCTCS Board of Regents or because the Board of Regents, which is closely aligned with the system and KCTCS president, has final authority over awarding of tenure or promotion.

Frequencies. Analysis of the overall frequencies of participant responses for the scale suggested that participant responses were dispersed across the scale, though they leaned toward the local college. Table 4.4 outlines the frequency of participant responses for academic, administrative, and personnel decision areas as well as the total frequencies across the scale.

Table 4.4

Frequency of Participant Responses by Decision Area

Location of Decision Making	Decision Area			
	Academic	Administrative	Personnel	Total Frequency
Local College	18	33	25	76
Primarily Local College	22	30	9	61
Shared Equally	13	20	11	44
Primarily System	10	7	5	22
System	3	11	4	19

Dispersion of participant responses suggested that there was disagreement among participants about the location of decision making for the decision items asked about on the survey. In other words, participants perceived differently the location of decision making for decision items asked about on the survey. Despite differences in the perceived location of decision making among participants, there was some consistency in participant responses at the decision-item level as illustrated in the frequencies analyzed for each of the academic, administrative, and personnel decision areas.

Several reasons could explain why participant responses were dispersed across the scale. Geographic proximity of a college to KCTCS, which is located in Versailles, Kentucky, could determine the extent to which decision making was perceived to occur at the local college, was shared equally between the college and system, or was perceived to occur at the system. The president of a college in close proximity to KCTCS could have perceived decision making is more likely to occur at the college, with some input from the system, or perceived decision making to be shared between the system and colleges. On the other hand, the president of a college in far western or eastern Kentucky could have perceived decision making was more likely to occur at the local college or at the local college, with some input from the system considering KCTCS is located further away.

Moreover, a president's length of tenure could explain perceived locations of decision making. A president with a longer tenure could have perceived decision making was more likely to occur at the local college because he or she is more familiar with policy and decision making processes, whereas a president with a shorter tenure could

have perceived decision making was more likely to occur at the system because he or she was less familiar with policy and was under more direct observation. Similarly, a president's previous experience in a community college system can alter the perceived location of decision making. A president without previous leadership experience in a community college system could have perceived the location of decision making to be at the system or primarily at the system, with some input from the colleges given the fact that the colleges are under the governance of KCTCS.

Moreover, participants perceived that decision making occurred at the local college almost as frequently as is occurred primarily at the local college, with some input from the system. Similarly, participants perceived that decision making occurred at the system almost as frequently as it occurs primarily at the system, with some input from the colleges. This was evident at the decision- area and decision-item levels. These frequencies illustrated that either there was no difference in these locations for decision making or that participants did not perceive a significant difference in the location of decision making for the local college and primarily the local college, and for the state system and primarily the state system as the location of decision making.

Overall, participants perceived that administrative decision making, more than academic and personnel decision making, was shared equally between the college and system for the decision items asked about on the survey. Moreover, administrative decision making, more than academic and personnel decision making, was more likely to occur at the system. It should be noted that the survey included more administrative decision items than academic and personnel items.

Measures of central tendency and dispersion. Because participants used a modified Likert scale to identify the location of decision making for each decision item asked about on the survey, values were then assigned to the responses according to the system shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5

Range of Possible Values for Location of Decision Making

Scale	Value
The local college	-1
Primarily the college, with some input from the state community college system	-0.5
Shared equally between the college and the state system	0
Primarily the state system, with some input from the colleges	+0.5
The state system	+1

The range of possible values for the decision items was -1 to +1. A value of -1 would indicate that decision making was perceived to occur at the local college, whereas a value of +6 would indicate that decision making was perceived to occur at the state system. A zero value would indicate that decision making was perceived to be shared equally between the local college and state system.

The researcher calculated the mean for the overall perceived location of decision making as a measure of central tendency. The mean was used to assess the degree to which participants perceived decisions occur at the local college; primarily at the college, with some input from the state system; shared equally between the college and the state

system; primarily the state system, with some input from the college; or, the state system. The total mean value for the dataset is -0.36. This value suggests that across the decision areas asked about on the survey, participants on average believed the location of decision making to lean more in the direction of the local college, but with some input from the state system. However, this finding is an average across all decision areas participants were asked about. The researcher noted differences in participant responses at the decision area-level and at the item-level.

The researcher then calculated the means for each of the decision areas asked about on the survey. Table 4.6 summarizes the mean values by decision area.

Table 4.6

Summary of Mean Values by Decision Area

Decision Area	Mean
Academic	-0.32
Administrative	-0.33
Personnel	-0.44

The researcher calculated the means for each of the decision areas asked about on the survey to determine if there was a difference in the perceived location of decision making for the three decision areas. A mean value of -1 indicated participants perceived decision making occurs at the local college and a mean value of +1 indicated that participants perceived decision making occurs at the system. The mean value calculated for each decision area suggested that participants perceived that academic and administrative decision making does not lean toward either the local college or the state

system. Regardless, the mean values for academic and administrative decision making neither suggested that decision making occurred more at the local college or the state system, nor did they suggest that decision making in these areas was shared based on analysis of frequencies at the decision-item level. On the other hand, the mean value calculated for personnel decision making indicated that participants perceived personnel decision making leaned toward the local college, with some input from the system. Participants could have perceived personnel decision making more than academic and administrative decision making leaned toward the local college, with some input from the system because personnel decisions necessitated more flexibility and hence, more local discretion since employees are affiliated with a particular college.

Based on the frequency of participant responses indicating differences in the perceived location of decision making noted at the decision item-level, the mean values for the decision areas are not significant and are an average of the decision items asked about for each of the areas on the survey. The mean values reflected differences in the perceived location of decision making as previously noted. Furthermore, a comparison of the means suggested there is minimal difference in the perceived location of decision making for academic, administrative, and personnel decision making. Personnel decision making, more than academic and administrative decision making, was perceived to occur at the local college, with some input from the system.

Finally, the researcher calculated the range as a measure of dispersion given the small dataset and evident dispersion in participant responses noted in frequency analyses. The range for the dataset was calculated at 1.92, with 0.92 being the highest mean value calculated for a decision item and -1 being the lowest value mean value calculated for a

decision item. The value of the range reinforced previous analyses that suggested participant responses were dispersed across the scale. Altogether, these results warranted additional exploration conducted in phase two of this study to understand how presidents share academic, administrative, and personnel decision making.

Qualitative Findings

Qualitative findings are organized by research question and theme. The names John, Michael, and Sam were assigned to phase two participants as pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality. In some instances, themes overlapped, further reinforcing the complexities of presidential decision making. The relationship between themes is illustrated and explored in the following sections.

Research Question Two

The purpose of research question two was to explore how the KCTCS president and college presidents share academic, administrative and personnel decision making. The themes identified through analysis of interview data and documents point to: (a) flexibility; (b) system alignment; (c) governance structures; (d) combined effort; and, (e) location of authority. Multiple confounding factors were identified within these themes that further illustrate the complexities of presidential decision making in KCTCS. Additionally, exploration of the relationship between themes is examined in the following sections to further understand how presidents share academic, administrative, and personnel decision making.

Flexibility. Interview participants described flexibility in decision making afforded through policy. Specifically, a range of parameters within a policy illustrated what is expected across the system and provide a degree of flexibility in decision making.

The parameters allowed presidents to share decision making so that the application of policy meets the needs of the college or the particular decision at hand. For instance, KCTCS Administrative Policies and Procedures 2.11 *Work Load* outlined work load for faculty. The policy explained what a normal teaching load consists of for part-time and full-time faculty, reinforcing what is expected across the system. The policy included the phrases "normal teaching load," "shall not exceed," and "maximum number of contact hours per week," which left room for interpretation, and hence flexibility in decisions concerning faculty teaching loads (p. 140-41). In this regard, flexibility in decision making allowed presidents to share decision making, such that they were adhering to system policy while interpreting and applying policy within the scope of policy parameters at the college level.

In addition to faculty teaching loads, flexibility was also illustrated in decisions concerning faculty, administrator, and staff salary schedules. According to KCTCS Administrative Policies and Procedures 1.5.6.1 *College President/CEO*, the college president is responsible, without delegation, for recommendations on salaries and salary changes. The 2015-2016 KCTCS Salary Schedules, which guided this decision making, reflected a degree of flexibility through a series of four ranks for regular, full-time faculty and 18 bands for staff. Each rank and band level had a minimum, market (or midpoint), and maximum monthly salary, which increased for each rank and band level. The multiple rank and band levels, coupled with the minimum, market, and maximum salaries illustrated flexibility in policy such that presidents could share in the decision making for determining faculty, administrator, and staff salary schedules.

Interview participants suggested that flexibility in personnel decisions regarding salary schedules afforded the opportunity to attract and hire quality personnel, particularly for hard to fill positions or for colleges located in more rural areas of Kentucky. John described the process of a recent hire for which he offered a salary above the minimum in the pay band. John believed that the labor market and geographic proximity to a metropolitan area necessitated flexibility in the pay bands saying:

> I made the decision to move above the minimum in a pay band. So, what drives it for me is the quality, the credentials and the supply and demand in the labor market. Naturally, I think location is going to have something to do with that. If you were in [a metropolitan city] where there is a really strong supply, you're not going to be driven as much as you would in [more rural areas of] Kentucky where it's more difficult to get people there....You can go like 10 percent above movement within the pay band and I think at that point, I was not above the 10 percent. It gave me enough latitude that I could make that decision myself without anybody's approval.

Whereas John described that he had the ability to go 10 percent above movement within a pay band, Michael described that he had the ability to offer salaries up to the midpoint stating, "Within the bands in the faculty schedule, we have some flexibility, generally...I don't know if this is written down anywhere, but generally...I have the ability to offer salaries up to the midpoint." Michael described that movement within the pay band may not necessarily be dictated by policy in terms of the extent to which presidents have latitude in offering faculty salaries. So, again, policy outlined the parameters, but how the policy was interpreted led to differences in how presidents applied the policy. Despite the

fact that where someone falls within the pay band is largely determined by the college president, system approval was needed for offering salaries above the midpoint in a pay rank or band. Sam spoke frankly about how system approval was needed for salaries outside the policy parameters despite budget structures:

> All KCTCS personnel are employees of KCTCS, not the individual colleges. So, while the money comes from the college budget and the college president does make the hire, those salaries do have to meet those guidelines [outlined in policy] or receive approval for any outliers.

System policy, which the KCTCS president is responsible for creating, maintaining, and enforcing through delegation of authority by the KCTCS Board of Regents, outlined the parameters for personnel salaries, but college presidents had the authority to determine the salary within the rank or band level of the position. This flexibility was particularly relevant to shared presidential decision making concerning salaries because while all personnel are employees of KCTCS and not the colleges, employee salaries are paid from college budgets.

Interview participants and documents pointed to flexibility is decision making to the extent of policy parameters. These parameters outlined expectations across the system, but also allowed presidents to make decisions that meet the needs of the local college while still adhering to the policy. Flexibility was particularly relevant to shared presidential decision making given the fact that system policy guided the colleges but there were local differences among the colleges that necessitated differences in the interpretation and application of policy for decisions to be effective.

System alignment. Despite flexibility in decision making afforded through policy parameters that resulted in local differences among colleges, system alignment in decision making also emerged. Specifically, system alignment refers to a similar process or protocol for how decisions are made and who is involved in the decision making process that ensures alignment of the colleges with one another and with the system. System alignment was reinforced by system policy that was designed to guide or frame college level policy and subsequent decision making. This framing of policy unified system and college level decision making so there was alignment. In this way, policy framing reduced the extent of college autonomy.

Specifically, system alignment emerged in personnel decision making for granting faculty promotion or tenure. KCTCS Administrative Policies and Procedures 1.5.6.1 *College President/CEO* stated that the college president is responsible, without delegation, for granting of tenure for members of the college. KCTCS Administrative Policies and Procedures 2.0.1.1.1 *Faculty Tenured Employment Status* outlined two kinds of tenure appointment: (a) tenure-track appointments and (b) tenured appointments. The faculty tenure-track review period is generally one year, and shall not exceed seven years. Moreover, KCTCS Administrative Policies and Procedures 2.0.1.1.2 *Faculty Tenure-Track Employment Status* outlined the procedures for granting promotion or tenure, which included: (a) an outline of the roles and responsibilities of the college president, who makes recommendations to the KCTCS Chancellor based on the advice of the college advisory committee on promotion; (b) the KCTCS chancellor, who forwards recommendations to the KCTCS president based on the advice of the KCTCS Senate advisory committee on promotion; (c) the KCTCS president, who submits

recommendations to the Board of Regents for approval; and, (d) the KCTCS Board of Regents, who takes final action. Although policy suggested that the KCTCS president and college presidents share in the decision making for granting faculty tenure or promotion, policy also reinforced system alignment. Michael described the promotion and tenure process as system driven because all personnel are employees of KCTCS:

> We have an interesting thing in our system in that the faculty don't actually get tenure with a college, they get tenure in the system. So, all of the rules and guidelines and timelines and everything are consistent across all colleges.

As illustrated in KCTCS Administrative Policies and Procedures, the college promotion and tenure process and associated timelines paralleled the system process in that there was one local promotion committee, one system promotion review committee, and also one system appeals committee, which altogether reinforced system alignment in the decision making process for granting faculty promotion and tenure. In this way, presidents shared the decision making authority and responsibility for granting promotion and tenure because college presidents made the initial recommendation based on college faculty input, and the KCTCS president made the final recommendation to the Board of Regents based on faculty senate input. System alignment in the decision making process for granting faculty promotion or tenure was important considering that personnel are employees of KCTCS and not the individual colleges, but the colleges are the main educational units of the system.

In addition to faculty promotion and tenure, system alignment also emerged in administrative decision making, specifically for strategic planning. When asked about the strategic planning process for the system, interview participants described the process as

system driven, whereby the system planning process framed the college planning process. Michael described how the strategic planning processes occurred side by side for the system and colleges so that college strategic plans aligned with system strategic plans:

> The strategic planning policy, timeline, and guidelines are all at the system level. The requirements, as I understand, that guide the college's development is that we have to fit within the system wide, system level goals. So, now we're in a process or period where the system is changing their strategic planning from 2010-2016 to 2016-2022, so the college is also doing that. So, we basically follow by some period of time the discussion at the system level because if there's going to be some completely different direction or whole new goal that hasn't been a part of our planning before, then we would want to know that as we get into the process.

In addition to system alignment between the system and college strategic plans, the system strategic goals must reflect the system mission and other mandates found in the *Kentucky Postsecondary Education Improvement Act of 1997*. Specifically, KRS 164.0203 states that the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE), established as a result of the 1997 legislation, shall adopt a strategic agenda that serves as a guide for institutional plans. Similarly, the college strategic plan goals must align with the system goals as well as the strategic agenda of the Kentucky General Assembly. In this regard, system alignment extended beyond the system and individual colleges to include enacted state legislation and authority of CPE granted by legislation.

Despite dual, simultaneous strategic planning processes for the system and colleges, the process resulted in tension between balancing local differences and needs

with system alignment. John described challenges to strategic planning for the college, echoing differences among the colleges and between the system and colleges:

> I had this perspective over here in the left ear, you know this is KCTCS, but I had this right ear saying well that's well and good, but [more rural areas of] Kentucky are different than Versailles...Keep this congruent, but we have a different mission here.

While policy drove system alignment in strategic planning, resulting in college plans that aligned with the system plan, local college differences and needs presented challenges for system alignment.

Alignment in system and college strategic plans was accomplished through feedback and recommendations, as well as through involvement of key stakeholders. KCTCS Administrative Policies and Procedures 4.9.2 *KCTCS College Strategic Plan* (2015) states that "involvement in the development of the KCTCS Strategic Plan shall include the KCTCS Board of Regents; the KCTCS president's leadership team; faculty, students, and staff; foundation board members; boards of directors; and external stakeholders." The college strategic plan also reflected college feedback and involvement, including local employers and civic organizations. Moreover, feedback and the involvement of people occurred at multiple levels within the system and colleges. John affirmed the level of involvement of multiple people in the strategic planning process, saying:

> What we did was we waited until those [goals] were established at the system level. And the beautiful thing about that was all of the presidents, all sixteen

> presidents, and cabinet members were intricately involved in developing the system's planning goals and objectives. That was the beautiful part.

Sam further described how feedback from multiple people filtered up to the system and the KCTCS president, saying:

> The presidents will speak to the college leadership or college teams and start looking at what is important, and at the president's [leadership team] meetings, we discuss the strategic plan a lot. Those things then filter up through [the KCTCS president] to the KCTCS Board of Regents who has ultimate approval of the strategic plan. But, by and large, it's a very bottom up process whereby everybody has input.

The strategic planning process, though framed by the system, provided for a degree of alignment among the colleges and their resulting plans. Moreover, the process incorporated feedback and involvement of multiple people, which indicated a level of shared decision making. This shared decision making involved discussion among presidents through the KCTCS president's leadership team, information gathering at the college level by college presidents and also by the system office, reporting of information among presidents and the KCTCS president's leadership team during a retreat or monthly meeting, and the culmination of a plan informed by this information.

System alignment emerged in decision making concerning granting faculty promotion and tenure, as well as strategic planning for the system and colleges. Policy reinforced alignment in decision making because it outlined how decisions were made and who was involved in the decision making process. For both faculty promotion and tenure and strategic planning, alignment was accomplished through gathering feedback

and recommendations and involving key stakeholders. Still, alignment proved challenging because of local differences among the colleges and external influences.

Governance structures. As illustrated in the previous sections, policy is woven throughout decision making related to faculty teaching loads, salary schedules, granting of faculty promotion and tenure, and strategic planning. More specifically, policy outlines standards and expectations, reinforcing system alignment, and where applicable, policy parameters provide flexibility to address local differences among the colleges. In addition, governance structures emerge in policy, and interview participants highlight distinct academic and administrative governance structures that have a role in presidential decision making.

KCTCS Board of Regents Policies 1.4 *Internal Governance Structure: KCTCS Senate,* in accordance with KRS 164.580, states that the KCTCS senate "shall have the primary responsibility for determining academic policy and curricula development that shall be recommended to the president of the Kentucky Community and Technical College System." (p. 123). As such, KCTCS Board of Regents Policies attributes certain decision making to particular governance structures. Moreover, these governance structures are bifurcated such that academic decision making is a function of the academic governance structure and administrative and personnel decision making are a function of the administrative governance structure. Michael explained bluntly that setting admissions standards occurs in academic governance structures:

> I think admissions standards are set basically by the KCTCS senate. I know that locally, there are some guidelines and rules, if you will, of our faculty council, but

> typically that is the purview of the faculty and so it happens in the faculty governance structure at the system and local colleges.

Sam further confirmed that admissions standards are set by the KCTCS senate; however, all colleges are represented in this group:

> Well, admissions standards are pretty well set forth in the rules of the faculty senate. There's not a lot of leeway...I think that is a function of the rules and the team that is the student dean peer team. Every college has representation on that peer team and I think that is really where a lot of the rules are generated and filtered out to the faculty colleges.

As Sam described decision making about setting admissions standards, all colleges are represented in the KCTCS senate, which establishes admissions standards. These standards are then filtered to the colleges, for implementation by local college faculty through local college policy. As participants illustrated, setting admissions standards is a function of the academic governance structures, which exist at both the system and college levels. For this reason, academic decision making is less shared between the KCTCS president and college presidents than administrative or personnel decision making because of the presence of an academic governance structure.

Furthermore, even though system policy frames college policy, and both express the authority and responsibilities of the KCTCS president and college president, the result is a bifurcated administrative structure. While the KCTCS president "oversees the operation and management of the KCTCS community and technical colleges," authority and responsibility is delegated to the college presidents for overall administration of their respective college (KCTCS Administrative Policies and Procedures 1.5.1 *General*

Organization of KCTCS, 2015, p. 125). Bifurcated governance structures of the system and colleges, with assumed and delegated responsibilities of the KCTCS president and college presidents, presents complexities in navigating presidential decision making, whether it occurs at the local college, is shared equally between the college and system, or at the system.

Bifurcated governance structures manifest in two mirrored decision making processes occurring at the system and colleges. This is illustrated in the decision making process for granting faculty promotion and tenure. The promotion and tenure process involves college presidents recommending faculty candidates to the KCTCS chancellor, and the KCTCS president recommending faculty candidates to the Board of Regents. Both the college presidents and KCTCS president receive recommendations from a faculty advisory committee on promotion and tenure. In this regard, both the college presidents and the KCTCS president have a role in recommending candidates for promotion and tenure; however, what is evident in this process is the KCTCS president has more authority because he or she can choose to accept or ignore the recommendations of college president and the faculty advisory committee.

Policy attributes decision making to particular governance structures, resulting in dual academic and administrative structures, both of which emerged as bifurcated because they exist at the system and college. Additionally, policy attributes authority to either the KCTCS Board of Regents, KCTCS president, KCTCS senate, or college presidents. The divided authority between the system and colleges, with assumed and delegated responsibilities of the KCTCS president and college presidents by the KCTCS Board of Regents, presents complexities in navigating presidential decision making.

These complexities are magnified by presidential interpretation and application of policy and local differences among the colleges that warrant flexibility in decision making.

Combined effort. Although the purpose of research question two was to explore how the KCTCS president and college presidents share academic, administrative, and personnel decision making, the researcher neither defined this for interview participants, nor included the language of "shared decision making" in the interview protocol. Analysis of interview data revealed that none of the interview participants described the decision making process for various academic, administrative, and personnel decisions as *shared*. Rather, shared decision making was characterized as a *combined effort* involving conversation or discussion among the KCTCS president and college presidents, or within the KCTCS president's leadership team, which includes the KCTCS president, KCTCS vice presidents, KCTCS chancellor, and college presidents. This combined effort, which closely resembled shared decision making, emerged at multiple levels within the system and colleges.

Combined effort is illustrated in the decision making process for setting tuition. The KCTCS Board of Regents ultimately sets tuition for the system and colleges, which is based on the maximum tuition percentage increase set by CPE (KRS 164.020 *Powers and Duties of the Council*, 2014*)*. However, interview participant responses painted the decision making process as one that represents a combined effort. John passionately described how the KCTCS president gathered feedback and involved college presidents in setting tuition, even though this decision belonged to the system:

> You may not have heard anything about presidential topic teams. When [the current KCTCS president] came, he established this new…spirit of balance. And

> that balance was…we're not going to have any top down initiatives. So, [presidents were appointed] to serve on the tuition and fee committee…to make a recommendation on tuition increases and possible fees that should be added...it approved by the presidents and our president's leadership team. It was amazing how well it was received, but the system had to endorse it, naturally. But in this particular case, the presidents introduced the idea, it came up to the system president, who then is going to recommend it to the Board of Regents. I think because it was a well laid out, broad based, interrelated process, that's how the decision making was reached.

John further explained that the involvement of multiple people contributed to a "well thought out, well defined, well supported process" because "decision making was done at many different levels, at our committee level, then at the presidential level, the system president, then CPE, and now the KCTCS Board of Regents." Although policy plays a role is setting tuition, and these policies outline the roles, responsibilities, and powers of multiple people involved, the decision making process for setting tuition was representative of a combined effort characteristic of conversation and discussion, as well as the gathering of feedback and recommendations.

In addition to a combined effort illustrated in this response, John also implied differences in leadership style associated with the decision making process for setting tuition. Specifically, John noted, "When [the current KCTCS president] came, he established this new…spirit of balance," implying that decision making processes differ relative to the leader or person in the position. John remarked that this approach would not have been taken by a former president: "…traditionally, that probably would not have

been done that way under a former administrator… [the current KCTCS president] said no, that's not the way we're going to do it. I want our topic teams to do it." Hence, responsibilities and powers are established in policy for setting tuition; however, the approach to decision making differs depending on the person leading the decision making process or the persons involved in the decision making process.

In addition, participants alluded to a combined effort approach in setting enrollment targets the individual colleges. Michael explained that while system has not established numerical or percentage targets for enrollment, conversation takes place at the system level:

> Some years we have been really focused on increasing enrollment...the last few years that has not been the case. We have those conversations at the system level. There aren't any, in my experience...numerical or percentage targets [but] certainly there have been efforts or directives to increase enrollment...I think it's more like both at the system level and at the college level we try to talk about strategies and particular efforts or particular targeted populations rather than numerical targets.

As such, Michael characterized the decision making process for setting enrollment targets for the individual colleges as a combined effort approach that involved conversation at the system and college levels. Michael rationalized that numerical targets were not helpful because of budget and other environmental constraints. In regards to using numerical targets, Michael stated:

> I find those kinds of things not terribly helpful because there's so much that is unclear. I mean, right now, it couldn't be any more sort of a toss-up because we

> don't know what's coming out of the budget...we don't know what kind of tuition there's going to be...we don't know what kind of extra support financially there might be.

As Michael described it, the decision making process for setting enrollment targets is neither driven by the system nor by the colleges. Instead, conversation surrounded the decision making process for setting enrollment targets and these conversations took place at the system and college levels. Moreover, budget and funding play a role in the decision making process for setting enrollment targets, and for this reason, Michael rationalized that conversation about initiatives or target populations, as opposed to numerical or percentage targets for growing enrollment, was the better approach to decision making.

Furthermore, document analysis revealed the decision making process for facilities planning is representative of a combined effort. In particular, *Internal Procedures for the Planning, Budgeting, and Constructing of KCTCS Facilities* (2006) outlines physical development plans over the years, capital planning, and capital budgeting for the system and colleges. Regarding capital planning, the policy states that "capital planning in KCTCS is a shared responsibility between the colleges and the System Office" (p. 11). The evaluation and prioritization of college capital projects is made using a ranking criteria approved by the KCTCS president's leadership team, which is comprised of the KCTCS president, KCTCS vice presidents, KCTCS chancellor, and college presidents. Following prioritization, the summary is submitted to the vice president for finance and facilities and the KCTCS president for review and reprioritization, specifically for those projects that have identical ranking scores. Then,

the final prioritization is "...presented to the president's leadership team for discussion and final priority ranking" (p. 16).

In addition to a being a shared responsibility between the system and colleges, the overall facilities planning process represents "a cooperative effort that may include college administrators, faculty, students, leadership teams, development officers, advisory boards, community leaders, planning consultants or other interested parties" (Internal Procedures for the Planning, Budgeting, and Constructing of KCTCS Facilities, 2006, p. 4). When asked about the process for establishing or closing a campus location, from inception through establishment, all participants described the gathering of feedback and recommendations from multiple stakeholders for opening and closing a campus. For instance, when describing the process for establishing a campus, Michael explained how he involved stakeholders: "…one of the first things I did was establish a neighborhood council kind of thing to get input from the community, to get to know areas of interest, [and] programmatic information…" Moreover, political stakeholders were involved in facilities planning because they are a source of revenue needed for establishing a campus. For this reason, John advised straightforwardly that political stakeholders should also be involved in closing a campus:

> But, you can't close immediately, you have to go to those people that helped you invest politically, whether it be the judge executive or the superintendent. And you have to talk about what is working, what is not working... the closing requires just as much time phasing out, in my opinion, as it does to actually establish that center.

Sam further confirmed that political stakeholders should be involved in closing a campus, and also echoed involvement of the community at large:

> Communities get really tied to their branch campuses, their centers. So, you really have to do a lot of homework to say this is why this is not working, and then it's a lot of communication from that point. You know, for a center to be closed, every community should have the option to try to help to increase enrollment, to try to find the right programs, to get every opportunity to make it work so that everyone from the college to the city mayor understands why it wasn't working.

As illustrated by interview participants, the decision making process for establishing or closing a campus involved feedback and recommendations from multiple internal and external stakeholders. Moreover, the decisions about opening or closing a campus can be politically charged because the decision is tied to funding needed to establish a campus or the need to protect relationships with stakeholders if the campus closes.

Despite the involvement of multiple stakeholders in the decision making process for establishing and closing a campus, and the *Internal Procedures for the Planning, Budgeting, and Constructing of KCTCS Facilities* (2006) characterizing facilities planning as a shared responsibility, all interview participants described a process that was more locally controlled. When asked about the system role in establishing or closing a campus, John explained that even when policy does not explicate a system role in a decision, the best approach is to maintain open communication and dialog:

> I would ask the system office for approval. Now, programmatic approval…all of that has to go through the system office. But, I believe in…the no surprises theory. I don't want [the KCTCS president] to hear anything that we're doing that

> he's not approving or endorsing or saying, hey that sounds like a great idea go ahead and do it. So, yes, [the system office] would still be involved whether it's in policy or procedure or not.

As indicated, it is the president's leadership style that characterizes how – and the extent to which – the system is involved in establishing or closing a campus.

As previously indicated, budget and funding play a role in the decision making process for setting enrollment targets. Likewise, budget and funding play a role in the decision making process for establishing or closing a campus. Interview participants echoed the role of budget and funding in this decision making process, specifically regarding the availability of resources. In particular, presidents explained that resources must be available to operate the campus location, regardless of whether or not you have the facility and space. In other words, the availability of resources, which often hinged on budget and funding, determined whether or not a campus is established. In regards to closing a campus location, enrollment, which largely drives budget and funding, was a deciding factor for presidents in the decision of whether or not to close a campus.

Combined effort, which closely resembled shared decision making, is characterized by conversation or discussion among the KCTCS president and college presidents, or within the KCTCS president's leadership team, to arrive at a decision. This conversation and discussion was informed by feedback and recommendations gathered from multiple stakeholders. This combined effort emerged in decision making for setting tuition, setting enrollment targets, and facilities planning. Moreover, participants described decision making processes relative to the leader or person in the position, suggesting that his or her approach to leadership mediated decision making processes.

Location of authority. Location of authority, as it emerged in interview and document analysis, was used by participants to describe where decisions occur, and in this regard, who has authority for decision making. Presidents described decision making as occurring locally or at the system, or within various governance structures. Moreover, documents outlined the responsibilities and powers of various structures, positions and groups, including the academic governance structure, the KCTCS president, the college president, and the KCTCS Board of Regents. Although location of authority was not used to describe how decisions are made or the decision making process, which was the purpose of phase two of this study, it helps to frame an understanding of how presidents share academic, administrative, and personnel decision making.

As previously illustrated, academic decision making occurred within the academic governance structures of the system and colleges. In this way, location of authority was reinforced by governance structures within the system and colleges. When asked about setting admissions standards, participants confirmed that the KCTCS senate is responsible for setting admissions standards. Sam described how the KCTCS senate was composed of faculty representatives from all of the colleges, and the KCTCS senate established the rules that govern admissions standards. Sam noted that despite local differences, colleges must enforce the guidelines set by the KCTCS senate: "Individual colleges...we all have little differences, but I would say [admissions standards] are more the guidelines and that type of thing than it is with choosing whether or not to enforce a rule, for instance. Those rules are pretty well set." As illustrated, the KCTCS senate was the clear location of authority for academic decision making, and specifically for decision making concerning setting admissions standards. As such, decision making originating

from the KCTCS senate must be enforced and colleges were not necessarily in a position to choose whether or not to enforce a rule. Still, what remained uncertain was how a rule was enforced and to what extent a rule was enforced by college presidents or by faculty at the colleges.

Location of authority was further reinforced by the roles, responsibilities, and powers outlined in policy. These roles, responsibilities, and powers were outlined in KCTCS Board of Regents Policies (2015), KCTCS Administrative Policies and Procedures (2015), Kentucky statutes, and various other system and college documents. An example of roles, responsibilities, and powers that alluded to the location of authority is evidenced in KCTCS Administrative Policies and Procedures 1.5.6 *Positions in the Colleges* (2015). This section of the policy outlines the general responsibilities of multiple positions in the colleges, including the college president. An outline of these general responsibilities reflects the scope of authority for various decision making areas, and in some cases, coordination of authority. For instance, the general duties of the college president include "development and implementation of an instructional program commensurate with the purposes of a comprehensive community and technical college" in conjunction with college faculty (p. 19). Because policy reinforces the location of authority through clearly outlined roles, responsibilities, and powers, there was a prescribed framework that guides where decision making occurs and who is responsible for or involved in the decision making process. This prescribed framework further reinforced alignment across the colleges in the system such that all college presidents maintained the same level of responsibility and associated authority.

The dual academic and administrative governance structures at the system and colleges further complicate the location of authority. Participants and documents made clear the location of authority for various academic, administrative, and personnel decisions. Specifically, interview participants and documents highlighted that academic decision making occurs within the academic governance structure, though the KCTCS Board of Regents, KCTCS president, and college presidents also maintain a level of authority and power as expressed in Kentucky statute and KCTCS Administrative Policies and Procedures. As a result, academic decision making is primarily a function of the academic governance structure, whereas administrative and personnel decision making is primarily a function of the administrative governance structure.

According to KCTCS Administrative Policies and Procedures (2015), authority may be delegated to college presidents or other positions or governance structures, which in some cases, changes the location of authority or alters the level of authority of a position or governance structure. For example, the KCTCS Board of Regents, with ultimate authority for various academic, administrative and personnel decision making, delegates authority to the KCTCS president, who then delegates authority to the college presidents with responsibility to the System Office, an arm of the KCTCS president (KCTCS Board of Regents Policies, p. 117). The KCTCS president maintains the majority of authority as well as creates, interprets, and enforces existing system policies, which further implies that the KCTCS president maintains a higher level of authority than college presidents. Similarly, college presidents serve "under the general direction of the KCTCS president" (KCTCS Administrative Policies and Procedures, p. 32). College presidents may delegate authority to other positions in the college; thus, delegation of

authority further complicates presidential decision making because it can change the location of authority or alter the level of authority of a position.

Given the presence of an academic governance structure outlined in Kentucky statute, KCTCS Rules of the Senate 2015-16, and KCTCS Administrative Policies and Procedures (2015) and further referenced by interview participants, college presidents appeared to delegate academic decision making to the academic governance structure. Delegation of academic decision making was implied in policy as well as interview data. When asked about the decision making process for determining faculty teaching loads, Michael described a system policy that establishes parameters for the number of teaching hours; however, this policy was interpreted and applied by academics at the local college:

> Generally, the decisions about teaching schedules and so forth are made at the colleges within academics, with support and conversation among other leaders, perhaps...We have made the decision [to increase faculty teaching loads], and again, the beginning of that conversation took place in academics. So, I weigh in if there are questions or there are policy issues, or if a situation like this is not our normal practice. Then, obviously I would need to be a part of that decision. Under normal situations, there's both a system policy and a college level policy, and as long as that policy is followed, then I wouldn't be involved in the day to day discussions.

According to KCTCS Administrative Policies and Procedures 1.5.6 *Positions in the Colleges* (2015), presidential delegation of authority for academic decision making is permitted, and moreover, within the scope of functions of the Chief Academic Officer and additional academic roles. Although participants indicated that academic decision

making is delegated within the local college, the extent to which policy outlines academic governance structures reinforces the presidential delegation of authority for academic decisions.

Location of authority was used to describe where decision making occurs and thus, who is responsible for decisions. Policy outlined the roles, responsibilities, and powers of various positions, which reinforced the location of authority. Moreover, the dual academic and administrative governance structures at the system and colleges necessitate clearly defined roles and responsibilities to ensure an effective and efficient decision making process. Although location of authority was used by presidents to describe decisions belonging to the system or the colleges, authority may also be delegated to other positions or governance structures, which in turn alters the location of authority or the level of authority of the position or governance structure for decision making.

Summary. Six themes emerged from the qualitative interview data and documents, including: (a) flexibility; (b) system alignment; (c) governance structures; (d) combined effort; and, (e) location of authority. Additionally, exploration of the relationship between themes was examined in the preceding sections to further understand how presidents share academic, administrative, and personnel decision making. Figure 4.2 illustrates the relationship between the emergent themes as well as factors that connect the themes together.

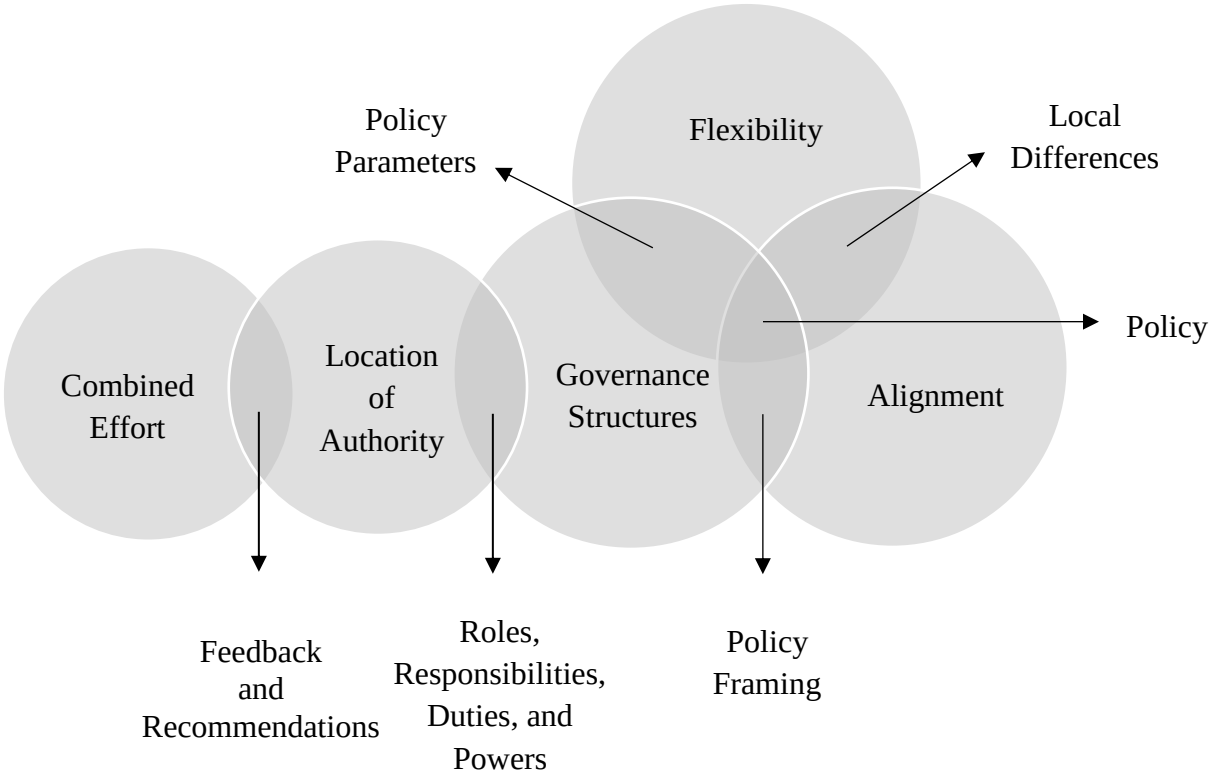

Figure 4.2. Relationship among emergent themes identified in the study.

Policy was at the center of flexibility, alignment, and governance structures. Flexibility was reinforced by policy as participants pointed to flexibility in decision making to the extent of policy parameters. These parameters allowed presidents to meet local needs, but also reinforced system alignment. Moreover, policy framing reinforced system alignment such that system policy framed college policy. Finally, policy, which outlined processes and procedures, reinforced governance structures for decision making because it outlined how decisions were made and who was involved in the decision making process.

Furthermore, policy outlined the location of authority for decision making, which was often attributed to the roles, responsibilities, duties, and powers of particular

positions or governance structures. However, even with specified locations of authority, analysis revealed a combined effort indicative of shared decision making that involved feedback and recommendations. Policy further echoed the use of feedback and recommendations at multiple levels within the system and colleges as well as through involvement of external stakeholders.

Research Questions Three and Four

The purpose of the third and fourth research questions was to guide the exploration of presidential decision making in KCTCS by developing an understanding of how particular state economic, political, and social contexts influence presidential decision making as well as what roles the KCTCS Board of Regents and college boards of directors play in system-level and college-level decision making. The researcher necessarily included consideration of state contexts and the roles of the KCTCS Board of Regents in the previous sections; however, this section will provide further exploration. The themes identified through analysis of interview data and documents included: (a) role, responsibilities, and powers; (b) decision effects; and, (d) feedback and recommendations. Some of these themes overlapped with those identified for research question two in the previous sections, but warranted further analysis and explanation.

Roles, responsibilities, and power. System policy and Kentucky statutes outlined the roles, responsibilities, and powers of multiple internal and external bodies, including the KCTCS Board of Regents, boards of directors, and CPE. These responsibilities and powers date back to the Kentucky Postsecondary Education Improvement Act of 1997, including subsequent Kentucky Revised Statutes. As exemplified in Kentucky statute, CPE has duties and powers reflecting the system as a

whole rather than the individual colleges. When asked about the role of CPE in decision making for the system, interview participants highlighted its role in setting tuition and approving programs while reinforcing that CPE has a statutory role. Although, John spoke strongly about how CPE can be an obstacle for the system and colleges:

> I think CPE can be a major hindrance…all they seem to be is a filter and their decision making is sort of like the wind and whatever day it decides to blow. One example is this dual credit scholarship program… [one moment it is] one half tuition, and then we hit this deal yesterday…one third [tuition]. Where did that come from?

Although the scholarship program originated from the Kentucky Governor's Office, CPE, as a state coordinating agency, is a filter for executive and legislative decision making. In this way, decisions flows from the colleges and system to CPE for approval, or decisions flow in the form of directives from CPE to the system and colleges that guide decision making. This was evidenced in their role in setting tuition and setting the strategic agenda for Kentucky postsecondary education.

In addition to CPE, the KCTCS Board of Regents and college boards of directors had clearly defined responsibilities and powers outlined in statute and reinforced in system and college policy. Whereas the KCTCS Board of Regents guided the system and had authority for decision making, the boards of directors guided the colleges and were advisory in nature (KCTCS Administrative Policies and Procedures, 2015). So, the authority of the KCTCS Board of Regents was more powerful than the boards of directors. Moreover, participants and documents highlighted that there was limited formal

and informal interaction between the boards, seemingly because boards of directors were advisory boards.

As illustrated, document and interview analysis highlighted the statutory role of CPE, KCTCS Board of Regents, and boards of directors, which reinforced the extent and location of authority for decision making pertaining to academic, administrative, and personnel decisions. In addition to the statutory role, interview participants also described an advocacy role for the KCTCS Board of Regents and boards of directors. Sam expressed the intentionality of their role as advocates, which can influence the direction of the colleges:

> As long as they have a good understanding of what the mission is, then they can have real good mission-oriented conversations with those [political leaders and business leaders], and then bring all of that information back to the president and to the college. So, I think to me, their most important role is that of engagement and advocacy, and if they can do that, then yes, they do have some influence on college direction. But, again, that's more of an ancillary function. That's not written in statue that that's their job.

While the KCTCS Board of Regents and the boards of directors have statutory responsibilities, participants described an advocacy role for board members that can be leveraged politically. However, this advocacy role depended on board members' awareness and understanding of the system and colleges.

Similar to the span of powers of the KCTCS Board of Regents, college boards of directors, and CPE, interview participants confirmed that individual legislators and the state legislature impacted multiple decision making processes, including budget and

funding, capital projects, and curriculum. Sam further explained that given the scope of power that legislators have, coupled with the influence of this power on the system and colleges, advocacy is important in influencing their decision making:

> KCTCS was formed as an act of legislation…so, when it comes to the rules that define our very existence, those folks matter. And the key in the decision making process is how well every individual legislator, whether it be a representative or senator, understands our colleges and system. Because when they go back and make decisions for us, they're going to make those decisions whether they know about us or not. They have to. The more they understand us, I think the better we will all be as they make those decisions that define our existence, our budget, and our capital projects.

Despite the importance of legislators in decision making that affected the system and colleges, John explained how powerful local influence can be for legislative decision making and that presidents must advocate for their respective college:

> I'm smart enough to know that our appropriation, and policies and procedures that come down that govern KCTCS are driven in bills that take us and put us in one ball, one pot. They aggregate us. And so, when I advocate, I advocate on behalf of the system, but I will also more importantly, advocate on behalf of the institution.

As interview participants explained, the state legislature as a body can influence decision making for the system and colleges. These influences must be mediated through advocacy and awareness not only of the system, but of the individual colleges given their local differences.

The importance of the roles, responsibilities, and powers of the KCTCS Board of Regents, college boards of directors, CPE, and the legislature to presidential decision making emerged in analysis. The KCTCS Board of Regents maintained authority over various academic, administrative, and personnel decisions, the boards of directors served in an advisory capacity for the colleges, and CPE is a funnel for system and college decision making. The involvement of these internal and external agencies in decision making implied a politically driven decision making process affecting the system and colleges. Awareness and advocacy was a tool that presidents used to navigate their influence and involvement.

Decision effect. Despite the policy responsibilities of the KCTCS Board of Regents and college boards of directors and their role as advocates for the system and colleges, interview participants differentiated the effects of their decisions as either direct or indirect. Interview participants perceived that the KCTCS Board of Regents was not directly involved in local college decision making. Michael stated that the role of the KCTCS Board of Regents was primarily driven by policy, which did not extend directly to the colleges, saying:

> We operate within the board's guidance and policy responsibility, so that's how they would be involved [in local college decision making]. I'm not aware of any situation where we're operating within policy where they would become involved in local decisions.

However, KCTCS Board of Regents' decisions have a direct and indirect effect on individual colleges within the scope of responsibilities and powers outlined in policy. Moreover, there were decisions that the KCTCS president's leadership team made for the

system that did not require KCTCS Board of Regents' approval. Sam explained that while the KCTCS Board of Regents made decisions for the system, the system also made decisions for itself:

> You know, there are a lot of system decisions that we make as a system, but some things, for instance, adding student fees, that's a Board of Regent's decision. That would certainly be a system effect, but the Board of Regent's decision. Same with setting tuition, the hiring of the KCTCS president. But then there are many things like for instance, if we were going to develop a statewide crisis management plan. That would be something that we would do as the president's leadership team, whereby presidents would go back and talk to their college to identify need, come back to the president's leadership team table and discuss with the other presidents where we go with that. Such an item would not need Board of Regent's approval, but it would be a KCTCS decision.

The KCTCS Board of Regents exercised authority over particularly important matters, and these decisions affected the system and colleges both directly and indirectly; yet, the system also made decisions that have a direct and indirect effect on the college. The differentiating effect of decisions illustrated the extent to which parts of the system and colleges are connected to one another for a given decision.

Whereas the KCTCS Board of Regents was not involved in local decision making, the college boards of directors were not involved in system decision making. According to KRS 164.600 (2003), the role and authority of the boards of directors are limited to the following: (a) recommend one candidate for college president from three recommendations provided by the KCTCS president, who makes the final appointment

and is not bound by the board's recommendation; (b) evaluate the college president and provide feedback on performance; (c) approve budget requests for recommendation to KCTCS; (d) adopt and amend an annual operating budget and submit to the KCTCS Board of Regents for approval; and, (e) approve the college strategic plan. Despite the policy role of the college boards that limited their influence on system and college level decision making, the effect of decisions made by the college boards of directors can have a direct and indirect influence on the system. Sam clearly illustrated the indirect system effect of the college boards of directors' decision to recommend a president for hire:

> One of the most direct in my mind is the board of directors at each college approves each college's strategic plan. Certainly, you know each college's strategic plan is important to the system as a whole...most of the system wide effects [of the board of directors] are indirect, such as hiring of the president. Well, that president then sits on the [KCTCS] president's leadership team that does affect a lot of statewide direction, but again, that's not a direct effect.

Moreover, John illustrated that although the boards of directors were advisory in nature, their evaluation of the president can have an indirect effect on the system, stating: "College board[s] of directors are advisory in nature. The only connection that I would see [to system-level decision making] would be the evaluation of me. And they send that information up to [the KCTCS president]." As illustrated in interview and document analysis, the policy role of the KCTCS Board of Regents can have an indirect effect on the colleges, and similarly, the policy role of the college boards of directors can have an indirect effect on the system. This indirect effect is the result of the scope of

responsibilities and powers of the boards outlined in policy, as well as the limited formal and informal interactions between the boards illustrated by participants.

Moreover, while CPE is not involved in the daily decision making of the system and colleges, CPE maintained power for various decisions that can have direct and indirect effects on the system and colleges. Kentucky statute protected these powers. For instance, CPE must approve new programs in order to eliminate "unnecessary duplication of programs within and among institutions" (KRS 164.020 Powers and Duties of the Council, 2014). Sam explained that the trickledown effect of CPE decision making on the colleges impacted their strategic direction:

> One of the roles CPE is supposed to play in higher education is programmatic structure. You know, individual academic program reviews. The reduction of duplication amongst college programming. You know, those types of things have a big influence on where the individual colleges go. They also have to approve new programs. You know, if two colleges are ten miles apart and both want to offer the same program, and CPE determines that the market is not there for two programs, then they don't have to approve the second program. And that is an effect on the individual college. So, I think any oversight body, such as CPE, does have individual effects on colleges although they are a statewide entity.

In some cases, the presence of a system did not insulate the colleges from the effects of decision making made at the state level. The trickledown effect of these decisions to the colleges was based on the responsibilities and powers of CPE, which date back to the Kentucky Postsecondary Education Improvement Act of 1997 when CPE was created.

Overall, CPE decisions had both direct and indirect effects on the system and colleges depending on the decision at hand.

The decision making of the KCTCS Board of Regents, boards of directors, and CPE had a pervading effect on the system and colleges. KCTCS Board of Regents' decision making ha both direct and indirect effects on the system, as well as indirect effects on the colleges relative to the particular decision at hand and the extent to which those corresponding parts of the system and colleges were connected to one another. The extent to which college boards of directors' decision making influenced the system and college was limited because of their advisory role outlined in policy. Finally, CPE decision making had both direct and indirect effects on the system and colleges, as illustrated in the decision to approve programs.

Feedback and recommendations. Interview and document analysis echoed the roles and responsibilities of the KCTCS Board of Regents and college boards of directors; however, in order for them to exercise their authority, the boards require ongoing communication and information from the presidents. Outlined in KRS 164.465 *Duty of Presidents of Postsecondary Education Institutions to Distribute Information to University's Governing Board Members* are duties of presidents of postsecondary education institutions to distribute information to governing board members.

Although presidents communicated with their respective board, the boards also served as a source of feedback and recommendations for presidents to use in their decision making. Michael explained that because of their statutory responsibilities, presidents reported to their respective board of regents, saying:

> Because they have three statutory responsibilities, we report to them regularly...on the state of the budget, we report to them on the kinds of college activities, particularly what I would call strategic issues like facilities development [and] facilities planning...They have three things that do impact the operations of the college administrative operations. And that is they evaluate me and they help to identify for me the things that they are particularly interested in us pursuing as a college.

In this regard, the boards of directors were a source of feedback and recommendation for presidents, which often occurred during regular reporting of information and through presidential evaluations.

Furthermore, Sam explained the importance of the boards of directors as a source of feedback: "Even though they don't have a specific statutory role in the approval of every little detail of college operations, I think the hope and desire is that they are actively engaged in the feedback loop." Sam also illustrated how this feedback was obtained through presidential evaluations: "…they evaluate me and they help to identify for me the things that they are particularly interested in us pursuing as a college. So, in that way, they are helping to set the strategic direction by their interaction with me related to my evaluation." In this manner, the boards further influenced decision making and the direction of the system and colleges through the evaluation of the KCTCS president and college presidents.

John illustrated that even though the scope of authority and responsibility of the boards of directors was limited, there was a two-way exchange of information that aided decision making, saying:

> I really believe firmly that I have to keep them informed...I do keep them informed. As far as local, I want them to know even though they don't hire or fire me, they evaluate me...they don't make any decisions regarding anything that we do...I do ask their opinion. I think that's important. I want their feedback...We try to be open and transparent and tell them. But it is not their role to be meddling in the college's business. That's just not it. However, they do bring great ideas to me. And I'm very open to those.

For John, the level of authority and responsibility of the boards of directors was clear, but this did not limit the extent to which he shared information with them and sought their feedback and recommendations.

Communication between the KCTCS president and college presidents, and the KCTCS Board of Regents, or between the college presidents and their board of directors involved regular reporting of information within the scope of their responsibilities and authority. In addition, dialog between a board and president in the form of feedback and recommendations helped engage board members and guided presidents in their decision making. In this way, decision making was not made in a vacuum, but instead, was made with the advice of the board.

Summary. Analysis resulted in the emergence of three themes that included: (a) roles, responsibilities, and powers; (b) decision effect; and, (c) feedback and recommendations. Exploration of these themes was examined in the preceding sections to further understand how particular state economic, political, and social contexts influence presidential decision making, as well as what role the KCTCS Board of Regents and

college boards of directors have on system and college level presidential decision making.

Analysis highlighted clearly defined roles, responsibilities and powers of the KCTCS Board of Regents, college boards of directors and CPE. The involvement of these internal and external agencies in decision making implied a politically driven decision making process affecting the system and colleges. In addition, analysis revealed the influence of individual state legislators and the state legislature on decision making. Altogether, presidents used awareness and advocacy to navigate their influence and involvement.

While the KCTCS Board of Regents, college boards of directors, and CPE had a role in decision making, the effect of their role was characterized as either direct or indirect. The extent of this effect was based on the scope of responsibilities and powers outlined in policy, as well as the extent to which parts of the system and colleges were connected to one another for a given decision. Furthermore, involvement of the boards in decision making necessitated ongoing communication between the boards and presidents. This communication emerged as feedback and recommendations that presidents obtained from their respective board and used to guide decision making.

Summary

Quantitative results illustrated that participant responses were dispersed across the scale, which suggested there was disagreement among participants about the perceived location of decision making for the decision areas asked about on the survey. Specifically, analysis of the overall frequency of participant responses for academic decision items illustrated that responses were dispersed across the scale. Analysis of the

overall frequency of participant responses for administrative decision making illustrated that responses were dispersed across the scale; however, administrative decision making leaned toward the local college more than academic and personnel decision making. Finally, participant responses illustrated that personnel decision making leaned toward the local college and was more likely to occur at the local college than at the system for the decision items asked about on the survey. Despite differences in the perceived location of decision making among participants, there was some consistency in participant responses at the decision-item level as illustrated in the frequencies analyzed for each of the academic, administrative, and personnel decision areas.

The mean value calculated for the overall location of decision making illustrated that decision making leaned toward the local college, with some input from the system; however, this finding was an average across all decision areas considering there were differences in participant responses noted at the decision area-level and the item-level. Moreover, the mean values calculated for each of the three decision areas suggested that participants perceived that decision making does not lean toward either the local college or the state system. Moreover, these values neither suggested that decision making occurred more at the local college or the state system nor did they suggest that decision making in these areas was shared. Measures of dispersion reinforced differences in the perceived location of decision making noted in previous analyses and calculations.

Qualitative analysis pointed to five emergent themes that help describe how presidents share academic, administrative, and personnel decision making. Policy emerged at the center of presidential decision making, which reinforced specified governance structures and locations of authority for decision making. However, analysis

revealed a combined effort indicative of shared decision making that involved feedback and recommendations. Policy further echoed the use of feedback and recommendations at multiple levels within the system and colleges as well as through involvement of external stakeholders.

Finally, qualitative analysis revealed three emergent themes that aid in understanding how state contexts influence presidential decision making and what roles the boards have in system and college level decision making. The KCTCS Board of Regents, college boards of directors, CPE, and the state legislature influence presidential decision making. Presidents used awareness and advocacy to navigate this influence, characterizing presidential decision making as a politically driven process.

CHAPTER V

INTERPRETATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study explored presidential decision making in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System by examining the location of presidential decision making and how presidential decision making is shared between the KCTCS president and college presidents for academic, administrative, and personnel decision areas. Additional questions helped guide the study and aided in exploring particular contextual and situational factors relevant to presidential decision making based on the review of literature. These include influences of the state economic, political, or social contexts, and the roles of the KCTCS Board of Regents and college boards of directors.

This chapter will provide a summary of results for both quantitative and qualitative methods employed. Following, the researcher presents a discussion of findings based on the research questions examined. Then, the researcher discusses implications of the findings for higher education policy, governance, and administration. Finally, the researcher closes with recommendations for further study.

Summary of Results

Quantitative results suggested that participants perceived differently the location of decision making for the decision areas asked about on the survey. Differences in participant responses were noted at the decision-area and decision-item levels, though there was consistency in participant responses for some decision items explored in the previous chapter. Moreover, means calculated for each of the decision areas showed that participants perceived a minimal difference in the location of decision making for the three decision areas. The total mean value for the dataset suggested that across the

decision areas asked about on the survey, participants on average believed the location of decision making to lean more in the direction of the local college, but with some input from the state system. However, this finding was an average across all decision areas participants were asked about. Measures of dispersion, specifically the range, illustrated dispersion in participant responses across the scale, which reinforced differences in the perceived location of decision making noted in other descriptive analyses and calculations.

For qualitative findings, flexibility, alignment, governance structures, combined effort, and location of authority emerged. Participants pointed to flexibility in decision making to the extent of policy parameters in order to meet local need. Policy framing reinforced alignment such that system policy framed college policy, which was important to align goals and objectives. Furthermore, policy, which outlined processes and procedures, reinforced governance structures for decision making. Policy also outlined the location of authority for decision making, which was often attributed to the roles, responsibilities, and powers of particular positions or governance structures. However, even with specified locations of authority, analysis revealed a combined effort indicative of shared decision making that involved feedback and recommendations.

In addition, qualitative findings highlighted involvement and influence of internal and external agencies, including the KCTCS Board of Regents, boards of directors, CPE, and individual state legislators, in decision making. The influence of these agencies was either direct or indirect and depended on the scope of responsibilities and powers outlined in policy. Also, the influence of these agencies depended on the extent to which parts of the system and colleges were connected to one another for a given decision. Influences of

the boards necessitated ongoing communication, and presidents used feedback and recommendations of their respective boards to guide decision making.

Discussion

The review of literature pointed to higher education systems as the dominant form of governance for public higher education, though the variability and complexity of systems presents challenges to understanding them (McGuinness, 2013; NASH, 2015). The literature on governance of higher education systems and presidential decision making is examined in the following sections as it relates to the findings of this study. In addition, theory outlined by Birnbaum (1988) frames an understanding of presidential decision making in KCTCS.

Quantitative Results

Quantitative results of this study are an extension of the study conducted by Ingram and Tollefson (1996), who examined the location of effective decision making in state community college systems. Based on their data analysis, they conclude that chief executive officers of state community college systems perceive the location of effective decision making in community colleges in their states to be at the campus level regardless of whether the decision involves academic, personnel, or administrative matters. Furthermore, Ingram and Tollefson (1996) conclude that personnel decisions are more likely to be made locally at the campus level than either academic or administrative decisions.

On the other hand, results from this study suggest differences in the perceived location of decision making among presidents in a single community college system. It is important to note that the results of the Ingram and Tollefson (1996) study reflect

multiple community college systems across the states, while the results of this study reflect a single system. In fact, Ingram and Tollefson assert that the heads of the state community college systems they surveyed "overwhelming identified the location of effective decision making authority in their states as at the local level...;" although, personnel decisions were more likely to be made locally than either academic or administrative decisions (p. 148). The findings of this study illustrated that personnel decision making, more than academic and administrative decision making was more likely to occur at the local college, with some input from the system, but this finding was not significant. Ingram and Tollefson survey heads of state community college systems whereas this study surveyed presidents at a single community college system. A comparison of findings from this study with those of the authors illustrates that differences in the perceived location of decision making when examined at the state, and the system and college levels.

Henry and Creswell (1983) examine the location of decision making across 26 multicampus community college systems for nine selected decision areas gleaned from the literature. Their results suggest that the location of decisions varies with the number of campuses in the system such that as the number of campuses increases, decision making becomes decentralized. In examining the findings of Henry and Creswell in the context of KCTCS, which is comprised of 16 colleges and over 70 campuses, one would assume that decision making is decentralized, or rather, decision making occurs at the local college. On the other hand, the findings of this study suggest differences in the perceived location of decision making among participants with decision making leaning toward the local college, with some input from the system. However, differences in the

perceived location of decision making were noted at the decision area-level and item-level. For KCTCS, the size of the system does not mean that decision making occurs at the local college.

The findings of this study examined in the context of existing literature on decision making in community college systems, specifically the studies conducted by Ingram and Tollefson (1996) and Henry and Creswell (1983), suggest that there are potential differences in the location of decision across community college systems. These differences call for a clear categorization of community college systems, as well as an examination of the location of decision making at multiple levels within individual community college system, in order to understand the implications of the findings.

Qualitative Findings

The qualitative findings of this study are examined in light of the review of literature that examined characteristics and governance structures of community college systems and presidential decision making. These findings are explored in greater detail in the proceeding sections as they relate to the literature.

Governance structures. According to Zimpher (2013), criticism of higher education systems centers on efficiency and bureaucratization of systems, reduced institutional autonomy, tensions between the system and respective campuses in multicampus systems, and competition among campuses within a multicampus system. Some of these criticisms emerged in qualitative findings. Policy and procedure, which are symbols of efficiency and bureaucratization, were numerous and guided presidential decision making in KCTCS. Moreover, framing of system and college policy reinforces bureaucratization because in many instances, there was a system and college level policy

that guided decision making. Despite policy parameters that provided college presidents some degree of flexibility in decision making, participants described alignment in decision making that resulted in reduced college autonomy and tensions due to local college differences. In other words, what may serve well the system may not serve well the colleges, and likewise, what may serve well one college in the system may not serve well another college.

King (2013) contends that these tensions stem from the different functions of the system and campuses. He outlines principles for the division of administrative governance functions within multicampus higher education systems, which includes two tiers – one tier comprised of system administration and one tier comprised of campus (or college) administration. This was evidenced in the bifurcated academic and administrative governance structures of the system and colleges, as well as dual system and college administrative structures. This tension was magnified by differences in the geographic locations and regional needs of the colleges. Altogether, bifurcated academic and administrative governance structures, as well as dual system and college administrative structures highlight increasing bureaucratization that makes navigating presidential decision making in KCTCS cumbersome.

Furthermore, King (2013) highlights that because the system administration works with the state board, it is more influenced by, and subject to, state politics. Because the system is a buffer between the campuses and the state board, the system shields the campuses from political influence (King, 2013). The findings of this study highlight that the KCTCS president is not a buffer between the state and colleges; however, political influence on the colleges may be direct or indirect depending on the extent to which the

parts of the system are connected to the colleges for a given decision. Moreover, whereas the system may be more influenced by state politics, the colleges are influenced by local and regional politics. The findings pointed to the importance of the role of the college president and the boards of directors as advocates for their respective college among local and regional politicians.

King (2013) claims that differences between the functions of the system and campus tiers of governance results in differing priorities and approaches to issues. On the contrary, differences in overall system and college priorities and policies were not evident in KCTCS. For instance, system policy frames college policy, both of which guided presidential decision making. Evidence of alignment in policy is likely a result of increased bureaucratization and the need for efficiency across the system given the bifurcated academic and administrative structures and dual system and college administrative structures. Moreover, the need for alignment in strategic planning is driven by state and regional needs because of the responsibilities and powers of CPE as a coordinating agency for Kentucky postsecondary education.

KCTCS presidents are faced with challenges associated with reduced college autonomy as a result of alignment in decision making, as well as dual system and college administrative governance structures, and bifurcated academic and administrative governance structures that increase bureaucracy. However, based on a review of literature, these challenges are not unique to KCTCS. Although alignment in strategic plans and priorities reduces college autonomy and limits flexibility in presidential decision making, alignment also helps advance a singular agenda that can result in a greater, collective impact of the system on Kentucky postsecondary education.

Presidential decision making. Henry and Creswell (1983) examine the location of decision making across 26 multicampus community college systems for nine selected decision areas gleaned from the literature. They conclude that faculty and student-related decisions are decided at the campus level, while strategic and financial planning decisions are made at the system level. The findings of this exploratory study revealed that the strategic planning process is outlined in policy and procedure, whereby the system planning frames college planning. Although strategic planning is guided by the system, qualitative findings showed that the strategic planning process in KCTCS reflects a combined effort inclusive of college presidents, faculty, staff, and other key stakeholders.

Moreover, Henry and Creswell (1983) conclude that decisions about promotions and salaries of administrators were generally made at the system level. While findings of this study point to a pay scale consistent across the colleges for faculty, administrator, and staff positions, the findings also highlight the role of college presidents in determining salaries of newly hired employees and the degree of flexibility in the pay scale that presidents explained was helpful to meet local college need. Qualitative findings revealed a process of decision making characteristic of inclusion, feedback, and recommendation that extends beyond the study conducted by Henry and Creswell (1983) and suggests the complexity of presidential decision making in KCTCS means it cannot be accurately characterized as occurring either at the system or at the college or campus levels.

In an examination of governance and administration of higher education institutions, Westmeyer (1990) describes how decisions are made, the procedures that are

gone through, and the data gathered that informs decision making. According to Westmeyer, decisions are informed by institutional policies outlined in various documents, including a handbook of policies or operations and policies for various boards and councils, among others. According to Westmeyer, policies span both academic and nonacademic decision areas. The findings of this study point to the dominant role policy plays in presidential decision making in KCTCS, which is consistent with the review of literature on the influence of policy in decision making.

For some decision items, such as strategic planning, capital construction, and granting promotion or tenure, system policy and procedure reinforced the use of feedback and recommendation in the decision making process. In an examination of the elements of decision in community college systems framed by Birnbaum (1988), Fryer and Lovas (1990) conclude that the dominant orientation toward leadership among all of the study presidents was encouraging greater participation and shared decision making. Though presidential decision making in KCTCS is primarily guided by policy, it also reflects involvement of key stakeholders and the gathering of feedback and recommendation at multiple levels within the system and colleges.

As illustrated in the review of literature, community colleges are closely linked to their communities (Fryer & Lovas, 1990 and Johnstone, 1999). This was illustrated in interviews and documents, which pointed to community involvement and involvement of multiple stakeholders in various ways. The fact that the system is comprised of multiple colleges, each serving different regions across the state, points to yet another layer of differences among the colleges they are closely linked to those communities. The fluid nature of this involvement, and the varying levels of involvement sought by presidents,

points to human conditions influencing presidential decision making that are rather unique to KCTCS.

Theoretical Framework

As illustrated in the review of literature, governance in higher education encompasses the structure, rules, and policies of the institution, as well its social relationships and culture, which underscores the multitude of theories used to study governance. Because the system is highly complex and interrelated, presidential decision making is best characterized and explained through the application of both structural and human condition elements of governance theory advanced by Birnbaum (1988) in his *How colleges work: The cybernetics of academic organization and leadership.*

Structural Elements

Presidential decision making in KCTCS expressed itself in relation to bureaucratic elements outlined by Birnbaum (1988). Although presidents surveyed in phase one perceived differently the location of decision making, alignment in decision making was reinforced by policy. Policy dominated analysis of presidential decision making in KCTCS, which is characteristic of bureaucratic institutions. Birnbaum (1988) contends that clear rules and regulations guiding behavior increases organizational certainty and efficiency. Specifically, according to Weber (1946), rules and policies help maintain uniformity in activities and also continuity when personnel change. Policy, as well as alignment in decision making across the system, emerged in analysis and point to bureaucratic characteristics. Given the large size and geographic span of the system, clear rules and regulations help coordinate work and ensure alignment across the system.

Moreover, dual governance structures emerged in analysis, which are characteristic of bureaucratic organizations. These dual control systems, as Birnbaum (1988) describes them, consisted of academic and administrative structures as well as dual system and college administrative structures. For example, the decision making process for granting promotion or tenure included a college level structure and process and a system level structure and process. Whereas Birnbaum suggests dual control systems are evident in bureaucratic organizations, analysis of presidential decision making in KCTCS points to triad control systems, namely the college administrative structure, system administrative structure, and then the academic structure, which further increases bureaucracy and presents challenges to presidential decision making.

As Birnbaum (1988) describes, conflict between dualism of controls is muted because one control system so clearly dominates the other, which is evident in KCTCS. Specifically, analysis of documents revealed that the administrative structure of the system clearly dominates that of the colleges, and moreover, the administrative structure of the system dominates the academic structure. For example, policy explains that the process for granting tenure or promotion involves recommendations from a committee of faculty to the college president, followed by a recommendation from the college president to the KCTCS chancellor. The system committee of faculty review and make recommendations for tenure or promotion to the KCTCS president, who then recommends personnel to the Board of Regents, who has final authority. In this example, the system administrative structure dominates the college administrative structure, and both administrative structures dominate the academic structure for granting tenure or promotion because of the location of authority outlined in policy. The process for

granting tenure or promotion is outlined in policy, and while it involves feedback and recommendations from faculty, these recommendations flow through the administrative structure of the college and then the system. Moreover, the system has more authority than the colleges in recommending candidates to the KCTCS Board of Regents.

Political Elements

To a lesser extent than the bureaucratic model, presidential decision making in KCTCS reflects elements of the political model. Birnbaum (1988) asserts that the interdependence of elements within a system results in politics and power: "it is only when individuals must rely on others for some of their necessary resources that they become concerned about or interested in the activities or behaviors of others" (p. 132). Thus, the interdependence of the system and colleges, coupled with the interdependence of the system and colleges with internal and external agencies evidenced in analysis results in politics and power. Power is clearly visible in KCTCS, but this power is primarily ascribed to the KCTCS Board of Regents because of their authority delineated in statute and policy. However, Birnbaum (1988) argues that legal delegation to trustees is not the sole source of authority, and presumably, power is concentrated at the colleges or among the college presidents because policy outlines a number of presidential decisions to be made without delegation.

In addition, KCTCS is comprised of 16 colleges, each of which reflect multiple, often competing, interests and agendas. Reflected in qualitative findings was local differences among colleges that resulted in challenges to alignment. These local differences reflect different interests and agendas for the colleges that may not necessarily align with the system or align with one another. Moreover, the authority of

the KCTCS Board of Regents and CPE reflects yet additional agendas that the KCTCS president and college presidents must navigate. Altogether, the dynamics of presidential decision making in KCTCS reflect multiple, often competing, interests that must be evaluated and considered in light of differences in their histories, traditions, and geographic locations.

According to Birnbaum (1988), conflict in political organizations is inevitable because of competition for resources. Qualitative findings highlight a politically driven decision making process for decisions requiring funding or involving external stakeholders. Participants explained the involvement of multiple stakeholders, such as the judge executive, superintendent, local legislators, and community members in establishing or closing a campus, which characterized the decision making process as politically driven. As such, decisions closely linked to budget, funding, and resources, such as establishing or closing a campus location, or decisions that affect resources provided by others, become part of the political arena.

Whereas coalitions emerge from a process of negotiation in political organizations (Birnbaum, 1988), this process of negotiation emerged as a combined effort in presidential decision making in KCTCS. For instance, according to documents, facilities planning is a shared responsibility that involves prioritization of building and construction across the system using ranking criteria approved by the KCTCS president's leadership team. Thus, the ranking criteria is a symbol of the negotiation process among colleges for facilities planning, and use of the criteria facilitates the shared responsibility of facilities planning reinforced in policy. In this manner, the shared responsibility

outlined in policy helps remove facilities planning from the political process of deciding who receives allocations for capital construction.

Anarchical Elements

An open systems approach to governance expands beyond earlier structural approaches to governance (Kezar and Eckel, 2004). This open systems approach accounts for human conditions, such as participation, leadership, and communication in governance, as well as local differences across colleges and campuses based on history, values, and environmental contexts. Moreover, according to Kezar and Eckel (2004), the open systems approach also brings attention to how broader economic, political, and social forces affect decision making. Presidential decision making in KCTCS expressed itself in relation to human condition elements espoused by the anarchical model.

In addition to the bureaucratic and political element explored in the previous sections, presidential decision making in KCTCS also reflects anarchical elements. Participation, involvement, and feedback emerged in analysis and is characteristic of anarchical organizations. Specifically, participation, involvement, and feedback emerged in combined effort decisions, which include establishing or closing a campus, setting tuition, and strategic planning. Moreover, presidents used feedback from their boards to inform decision making. Of importance is the fact that participation, involvement, and feedback also emerged in decision making processes for which there was no policy or procedure, or in processes for which the final decision would have a great impact on the colleges or their relationships and partnerships with other organizations and institutions. For instance, the researcher could not locate a policy or procedure for establishing or

closing a campus, which is a decision making process that involved internal and external stakeholders.

Whereas participation and feedback are characteristic of anarchical organizations, Birnbaum (1988) describes this participation as fluid, meaning that participants can participate in as many or as few decisions as they choose. Although data indicated the use of participation, involvement, and feedback at multiple levels, it does not appear fluid and instead, is prescribed by policy and procedure. That is, the system and colleges know who is responsible or expected to participate in decision making because it is outlined in policy and procedure. Clearly defined roles and responsibilities were outlined in policy and procedure, and these roles reinforced involvement and participation of various positions in decision making. So, while decision making for some decisions reflects participation, involvement, and feedback, this participation and the gathering of feedback is prescribed by policy and procedure. As such, bureaucracy impedes who is involved in what decision making processes. Moreover, although some decisions are made with participation, involvement, and feedback, there is still a finite location of authority or multiple locations of authority ascribed by policy and procedure.

Within the anarchical model, Birnbaum (1988) describes permanent structural garbage cans that draw attention away from the actual decision arena. These organizing bodies are more symbolic than real in terms of their authority. Participation, involvement, and feedback emerged in the form of committees for various areas of decision making. These committees were present in decision making concerning faculty promotion and tenure, and hiring personnel, for instance; however, these committees had no authority. As outlined in policy, the committee on promotion and tenure is a "recommending body

and the committee on hiring is a "recommending" body to the College President. So, while participation, involvement, and feedback emerged in relation to presidential decision making, the extent to which this participation influences decision making and the extent to which presidents use and apply this feedback remains uncertain.

Environmental Constraints

Birnbaum (1988) describes models of governance, suggesting that no single model is helpful for understanding governance. Instead, local history, values, and environmental contexts vary across colleges and campuses, a concept that stands in contrast to structural theories that have aimed to develop a typology of governance (Kezar and Eckel, 2004). As illustrated in analysis, environment constraints permeated presidential decision making in KCTCS.

The emergence of various environmental constraints, including internal and external agencies, suggests that the system and colleges must be flexible in decision making. Maintaining organizational certainty and efficiency is particularly helpful in uncertain and turbulent environments, and elements of the bureaucratic model can offer organizations more certainty and efficiency (Birnbaum, 1988). Having standard operating procedures, as Birnbaum (1988) defines them, allows the system and colleges to continue their work despite turbulent environments.

In several decision areas, the Board of Regents, CPE, and the state legislature impact the decision making process. For instance, state funding for higher education affected decision making related to setting tuition. The fact that the colleges represent semi-autonomous units makes them more responsive to environmental changes, so in this

regard, authority belonging to the college presidents provides for more flexibility and responsiveness, and further accounts for local differences among the colleges.

Coupling refers to the extent to which subsystems within a system are connected (Birnbaum, 1988). Tight and loose coupling are relative terms, but if subsystems share common variables and these variables are among the most important in those subsystems, then the subsystems are likely to be relatively tightly coupled. Whereas the system appears tightly coupled to the state based qualitative analysis, the colleges appear loosely coupled to the system and to one another. This is evident in the fact that survey participants perceived differently the location of decision making for decision areas asked about on the survey. In other words, differences in the perceived location of decision making among survey participants could suggest that the colleges are each coupled to the system to a different extent or that the variables they share differ in their significance. Loose coupling allows colleges to be more responsive to changes in the environment, and flexibility emerged in presidential decision making. Still, this flexibility emerged in contention with alignment in decisions across the system and colleges.

The need for flexibility emerged in presidential decision making, and policy parameters provided flexibility to an extent. However, flexibility in decision making emerged in contention with alignment across the system. In bureaucratic organization, a turbulent environment requires a more complex, flexible structure (Birnbaum, 1988). Tension between flexibility and alignment in decision making emerged because the system and colleges are driven by policy and procedure, but they also face environmental constraints that require flexibility. The extent of environmental influences on the part of the Board of Regents, boards of directors, CPE, the legislature, and the community at

large on decision making was evident. The importance of policy and procedure in decision making illustrates a bureaucratic structure, but when coupled with environmental constraints, tension between flexibility and alignment arise as it did for presidents in KCTCS.

Presidential decision making in KCTCS faces multiple environmental constraints, both internal and external to the organization. Birnbaum (1988) refers to organizational constraints that limit the power and flexibility of presidents. Environmental constraints evidenced in this study included multiple governance structures, and involvement and influence of stakeholders. Moreover, leadership constraints included bifurcated academic and administrative structures, greater involvement of trustees because of legal authority granted to them in policy, and increased bureaucracy as a result of dual administrative structures belonging to the system and individual colleges. These constraints require flexibility in decision making, which was evident in the findings; however, organizational certainty and efficiency provided by policy, as well as defined roles and responsibilities, helped guide decision making, which is critical in uncertain and turbulent environments.

Limitations of the Study

This study involved surveying participating KCTCS presidents about the location of decision making for specified academic, administrative, and personnel decision items, interviewing participating KCTCS presidents to further explore how decision making was shared for specified academic, administrative, and personnel decision making, and reviewing relevant documents to aid in developing an understanding of presidential decision making in KCTCS. The researcher conducted this study following a period of leadership transition with the former founding KCTCS president retiring and the former

KCTCS chancellor assuming the role of the KCTCS president in January 2015. As such, the findings of this study reflect presidential decision making at the specific time at which this study was conducted. Moreover, because the findings of this study pointed to approaches to leadership as a mediating factor in how presidents share decision making, the findings of this study may change if replicated at later time.

Phase one, which involved administering a survey to consenting participants, had a 35% response rate. Phase two, which involved conducting interviews with consenting participants, had 3 participating presidents. The response rate and participation in interviews limits the generalizability of the findings to presidential decision making in KCTCS as a whole. Furthermore, the researcher collected and reviewed documents pertinent to the research questions and to aid in understanding the context of presidential decision making in KCTCS. Given the possibility that documents exist but were not readily accessible, the researcher did not review all relevant documents.

As an exploratory study, the findings do not permit classification of a specified decision making process or reflect presidential decision making in all community college systems, or at other structural levels of systems. Likewise, the findings are not applicable to decision making involving faculty, staff, or students within a system, although the findings indicated that faculty, staff, and community members were involved in various decision making process for which presidents were involved. Moreover, the academic, administrative, and personnel decision categories and corresponding decisions are not inclusive of every decision made in a system, but instead are representative of the most cited decisions in the literature.

Implications for Higher Education Policy, Governance, and Administration

Structural and human condition elements of governance theory are reflected in the presidential decision making in KCTCS, though with some degree of variability given the dual system and college structures and local differences among colleges. Regardless of policy and procedure, and clearly defined roles and responsibilities attributed to particular positions, presidential decision making reflects a particular approach to leadership. Given the size of the system, dual system and college structures, and bifurcated academic and administrative structures, a presidential orientation toward a combined effort in decision making reflective of inclusion and feedback can help ensure that decision making reflects a sense of systemness as defined by Zimpher (2013) so that as a whole, the system functions in a way that is more impactful than if the individual colleges were operating alone.

Despite the importance of a combined effort for decision making to achieve systemness, presidents must acknowledge and navigate local differences among colleges within a system, and further ensure that decisions address or reflect these differences. Navigating these local differences means being collaborative, embracing feedback and recommendations, and demonstrating compromise and reconciliation as decisions in the KCTCS president's leadership team are informed by the perspectives and agendas of the KCTCS president, KCTCS chancellor, KCTCS vice presidents, and each of the 16 college presidents.

Finally, the application of theory outlined by Birnbaum (1988) illustrates that presidential decision making in KCTCS reflects elements of the bureaucratic, political, collegial, and anarchical models. As Birnbaum (1988) argues, no one model is more

important or more effective than another, and organizations display elements of more than one model in any given moment. Because presidential decision making reflects elements of multiple models, presidential awareness of the presence and context of these models is imperative to effective decision making. Awareness of these models can lead to adaptability in approaches to leadership that are most relevant to the particular model(s) present.

Suggestions for Future Research

The broad applicability of theory on governance and decision making in higher education systems makes a case for more quantitative and exploratory studies on presidential decision making in community college systems. Because of the likelihood of a high variability of governance structures across community college systems, additional quantitative and exploratory studies are warranted. Moreover, a methodological approach that includes qualitative procedures and analyses for a defined population such as presidents of campuses or colleges within systems can account for perceptions of decision making as well as the particular governance structure of the systems.

Structural variations in systems across the states suggest that further research should focus on single community college systems with a clear description of its structure. Although Garrett (1993) defines a community college as a state that has one or more public, two-year, postsecondary, educational institutions for the purpose of his study, McGuinness (1991), Johnstone (1999), and Lane (2013) provide a classification of higher education systems that points to structural variations across systems. Henry and Creswell (1983) study 26 multicampus systems, Ingram and Tollefson (1996) study 49 state community college systems, and Fryer and Lovas (1990) study 23 community

colleges primarily in California. Thus, studies that explore decision making in one or a few community college systems can contribute to the literature on decision making in community college systems and help contextualize the results of previous studies.

Birnbaum (1988) makes a claim for the integration of the bureaucratic, political, collegial, and anarchical models because "institutions can share similar core cultural elements and organizational subsystems and still not function in the same way" (p. 176). For this reason, studies examining single institutions can contribute greatly to the applicability of earlier, large sample studies on decision making in community college systems, and further characterize community college systems by providing greater depth of understanding. Then, cumulatively, these studies can be examined to illustrate patterns in decision making processes, community college system governance and characteristics, and presidential leadership.

Finally, studies framing presidential decision making with open systems theories can further expand our understanding of the applicability of open systems theories to higher education systems, and especially to community college systems. Specifically, studies that include qualitative observations of presidential meetings in community college systems can provide a better understanding of behaviors, cultural and environmental factors, and institutional contexts that affect presidential decision making. Similarly, framing studies on presidential decision making with open systems theories provides yet another lens with which to understand presidential decision making, as opposed to framing presidential decision making with primarily structural theories of governance.

Summary

The findings of this study, in light of previous literature and theory outlined by Birnbaum (1988), illustrate that presidential decision making in KCTCS is characterized primarily by bureaucratic and political elements, but also by anarchical elements. Although quantitative results suggest that participants perceived differently the location of decision making, qualitative findings evidenced a combined effort in decision making as well as an awareness of various locations of authority belonging to particular governance structures or positions. Qualitative findings further revealed various complexities that affect presidential decision making and how presidents navigate shared decision making. These complexities emerged as tension between flexibility and alignment in decision making, as well as multiple governance structures and environmental constraints, which reduce college autonomy and the authority of presidents. What these structures and constraints necessitate is a combined effort in decision making so that local needs may be incorporated in a way that still promotes the needs of the system, which are closely tied to the needs of the state.

With the inclusion of both quantitative and qualitative methods focusing on a single community college system, this exploratory study highlighted additional facets of presidential decision making not examined in previous studies. Particularly, this study noted additional locations of authority outside the system and colleges to include the boards and state postsecondary agency. Furthermore, this study illustrated that decision making cannot be accurately portrayed as occurring at the system level, shared, or at the college level. Instead, the complexities and nuances of presidential decision making in KCTCS illustrated multiple issues and concerns as presidents navigate decision making

processes. Furthermore, these issues and concerns are best framed by both structural and human condition elements of governance theory. As such, studies exploring presidential decision making in a single community college system framed by both elements of governance theory can best advance our knowledge and understanding of presidential decision making in community college systems.

Appendix A

UK IRB Approval

UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY

Office of Research Integrity
IRB, IACUC, RDRC
315 Kinkead Hall
Lexington, KY 40506-0057
859 257-9428
fax 859 257-8995
www.research.uky.edu/ori/

Initial Review

Approval Ends
February 15, 2017

IRB Number
16-0044-P4S

TO: Sarah Jill Page
Education
448 Lemon Drop Lane
Lexington, KY 40511
PI phone #: (850) 712-6320

FROM: Chairperson/Vice Chairperson
Non-medical Institutional Review Board (IRB)

SUBJECT: Approval of Protocol Number 16-0044-P4S

DATE: February 25, 2016

On February 17, 2016, the Non-medical Institutional Review Board approved your protocol entitled:

An Exploratory Study of Presidential Decision Making in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System

Approval is effective from February 17, 2016 until February 15, 2017 and extends to any consent/assent form, cover letter, and/or phone script. If applicable, attached is the IRB approved consent/assent document(s) to be used when enrolling subjects. **[Note, subjects can only be enrolled using consent/assent forms which have a valid "IRB Approval" stamp unless special waiver has been obtained from the IRB.]** Prior to the end of this period, you will be sent a Continuation Review Report Form which must be completed and returned to the Office of Research Integrity so that the protocol can be reviewed and approved for the next period.

In implementing the research activities, you are responsible for complying with IRB decisions, conditions and requirements. The research procedures should be implemented as approved in the IRB protocol. It is the principal investigators responsibility to ensure any changes planned for the research are submitted for review and approval by the IRB prior to implementation. Protocol changes made without prior IRB approval to eliminate apparent hazards to the subject(s) should be reported in writing immediately to the IRB. Furthermore, discontinuing a study or completion of a study is considered a change in the protocol's status and therefore the IRB should be promptly notified in writing.

For information describing investigator responsibilities after obtaining IRB approval, download and read the document "PI Guidance to Responsibilities, Qualifications, Records and Documentation of Human Subjects Research" from the Office of Research Integrity's IRB Survival Handbook web page [http://www.research.uky.edu/ori/IRB-Survival-Handbook.html#PIresponsibilities]. Additional information regarding IRB review, federal regulations, and institutional policies may be found through ORI's web site [http://www.research.uky.edu/ori]. If you have questions, need additional information, or would like a paper copy of the above mentioned document, contact the Office of Research Integrity at (859) 257-9428.

N. Van Tuhany, PhD/ah
Chairperson/Vice Chairperson

Appendix B

UK IRB Approval of Modification Request

Office of Research Integrity
IRB, IACUC, RDRC
315 Kinkead Hall
Lexington, KY 40506-0057
859 257-9428
fax 859 257-8995
www.research.uky.edu/ori/

Procedures

Modification Review	Approval Ends	IRB Number
	February 15, 2017	16-0044-P4S

TO: Sarah Jill Page
Education
448 Lemon Drop Lane
Lexington, KY 40511
PI phone #: (850)712-6320

FROM: Chairperson/Vice Chairperson
Institutional Review Board (IRB)

SUBJECT: Approval of Modification Request for Protocol 16-0044-P4S

DATE: April 20, 2016

On April 18, 2016, the Institutional Review Board approved your request for modifications in your protocol entitled:

An Exploratory Study of Presidential Decision Making in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System

If your modification request necessitated a change in your approved informed consent/assent form(s), attached is the new IRB approved consent/assent form(s) to be used when enrolling subjects. [Note, subjects can only be enrolled using informed consent/assent forms which have a valid "IRB Approval" stamp, unless waiver from this requirement was granted by the IRB.

Note that at Continuation Review, you will be asked to submit a brief summary of any modifications approved by the IRB since initial review or the last continuation review, which may impact subject safety or welfare. Please take this approved modification into consideration when preparing your summary.
For information describing investigator responsibilities after obtaining IRB approval, download and read the document "PI Guidance to Responsibilities, Qualifications, Records and Documentation of Human Subjects Research" from the Office of Research Integrity's Guidance and Policy Documents web page [http://www.research.uky.edu/ori/human/guidance.htm#PIresp].

Additional information regarding IRB review, federal regulations, and institutional policies may be found through ORI's web site [http://www.research.uky.edu/ori]. If you have questions, need additional information, or would like a paper copy of the above mentioned document, contact the Office of Research Integrity at (859) 257-9428.

Norma Van Tubergen, Ph.D./dd
Chairperson/Vice Chairperson

Appendix C

KCTCS HSRB Approval

300 North Main Street
Versailles, KY 40383
(859) 256-3100
Website: kctcs.edu

12/3/2015

Sarah Jill Page
Bluegrass Community & Technical College
200 Oswald
470 Cooper Dr.
Lexington, KY 40502

RE: Presidential Decision Making in a Community College System

Dear Sarah:

After careful consideration of your application to the KCTCS Human Subjects Review Board, I have determined that you are eligible for an expedited review under from federal regulations regarding the protection of human subjects based on your research using a procedure that meets the exempt review criteria section 7 (2).

Thank you for your cooperation in meeting the federal requirements for conducting research that utilizes human subjects. We appreciate your notification to this board and we will keep your information on file.

Sincerely,

Rhonda R. Tracy, Ph.D.
KCTCS Chancellor

Pamela M. Duncan
Associate General Counsel
Chair, KCTCS Human Subjects Review Board

cc: Alicia Crouch
Interim Vice Chancellor of Research & Policy Analysis

KCTCS
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KENTUCKY COMMUNITY & TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM

Appendix D

Initial Participant Solicitation Email

To:
From:
Subject: Your participation in a KCTCS exploratory study

Hello,

You are invited to participant in an exploratory study of presidential decision making in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System. The system president and all college presidents are being solicited to participate in this study. You are being invited to take part in this study because you serve as either the system president or a college president in the system.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the location of decision making in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System and further explore how presidents negotiate shared decision making between the system and individual colleges in certain areas.

Data will be collected in two sequential phases. You are being asked to participate in one or both phases of the study. Phase One includes completing an online survey. Phase Two includes completing an interview with the researcher. Also, presidents participating in Phase Two will be asked to share documents relevant to the study.

Your participation in this study would be confidential. While publication or presentation of the results of this study will include the name of the system, you would not be personally identified. All results from this study will be reported in aggregate and coded using pseudonyms. There is a risk that participants could be re-identified based on information that may be used in publication.

Attached to this email is the participation form that provides additional details about the study. If you choose to participate in this study, and I do hope that you will, please complete and submit the attached form by Friday, May 6. You will select one option for your participation, save the completed document, and then reply to this email with the completed document as a new attachment.

If you choose to decline participation in this study, please complete and submit the attached form by Monday, March 7. You will select that you decline participation, save the completed document, and then reply to this email with the completed document as a new attachment. If you decline participation, you will not receive further communication about this study.

If you have any questions about this study or your participation, please contact me by email at jill.page@uky.edu or by phone at 850-712-6320.

Sincerely,

Appendix E

Consent Form for Initial Participant Solicitation

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

An exploratory study of presidential decision making in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System

You are invited to participate in an exploratory study of presidential decision making in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System. The system president and all college presidents are being solicited to participate in this study. You are being invited to take part in this study because you serve as a president in the system.

The person in charge of this study is Sarah Jill Page of University of Kentucky Department of Educational Leadership Studies. As a doctoral candidate, she is being guided in this research by Wayne Lewis, Associate Professor of Educational Leadership Studies.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the location of decision making in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System and further explore how presidents negotiate shared decision making between the system and individual colleges in certain areas.

You will be asked to participate in a survey in Phase One of the study and an interview in Phase Two of the study, though you may elect to participate in only one or both phases of the study. Also, you will be asked to provide documents related to presidential decision making, such as meeting agendas, meeting minutes, and system and college policies and procedures.

You will be asked to participate in either an online survey or interview, or both. The survey will be administered electronically via an email link in February and will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Additionally, interviews will take place in April in one of several formats, including either in-person, video-conference, or phone. All interviews, regardless of format, will be audio recorded. You will select which of these formats you are willing to be interviewed. Interviews will last approximately 60 minutes. In-person interviews will be conducted at an agreed upon site location. The total amount of time you will be asked to volunteer for this study is approximately 90 minutes between the months of February and April for both Phase One and Phase Two of the study.

Your participation in this study will be confidential. Every reasonable effort will be made to keep confidential all research records that identify you to the extent allowed by law. Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. While publication or presentation of the results of this study will include the name

of the system, you will not be personally identified. All results from this study will be reported in aggregate and coded using pseudonyms.

I will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is. Paper records will be stored in a locked file box only accessible by the researcher. All paper records will be scanned and stored electronically. Electronic records will be stored on a password-protected computer with firewall protection. Coding and the use of pseudonyms will be used to protect your name and identity. I may be required to show information which identifies you to people who need to be sure I have done the research correctly; these would be people from such organizations as the University of Kentucky.

Please be aware, while I make every effort to safeguard your data once received from the online survey/data gathering company, given the nature of online surveys, as with anything involving the Internet, we can never guarantee the confidentiality of the data while still on the survey/data gathering company's servers, or while en route to either them or us. It is also possible the raw data collected for research purposes may be used for marketing or reporting purposes by the survey/data gathering company after the research is concluded, depending on the company's Terms of Service and Privacy policies.

You may elect to participate in all, part, or none of the study. You may withdraw your participation from the study at any time and for any reason. There are no discomforts associated with participation, nor are there any direct benefits to you. There is a risk that you could be re-identified due to information published about participants. Additionally, there are no costs associated with taking part in this study, nor is there any reward or compensation for taking part in this study. If you do not want to participate in this study, there are no other choices except not to take part in the study.

You may ask any questions that come to mind. If you have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints about the study, you can contact the investigator, Sarah Jill Page by email at jill.page@uky.edu or by phone at 850-712-6320. You may also contact the supervising UK faculty member, Dr. Wayne Lewis, by phone at 859-257-2540, or by email at wayne.lewis@uky.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the staff in the Office of Research Integrity at the University of Kentucky between the business hours of 8am and 5pm EST, Mon-Fri. at 859-257-9428 or toll free at 1-866-400-9428. I will provide a signed copy of this consent form to all persons who consent to participate in any part of the study.

If you are willing to participate in all or part of this study, please select *one* of the boxes below indicating your consent to participate in either only Phase One, only Phase Two, or both Phase One and Phase Two of the study. If you decline to participate in this study, please indicate below by selecting the appropriate box. Please submit this form electronically to the investigator at jill.page@uky.edu.

□ Phase One only (online survey)

□ Phase Two only (interview)

□ Both Phase One and Phase Two (online survey and interview)

□ Neither Phase One nor Phase Two (decline participation)

Appendix F

Survey Solicitation Email

To:
From:
Subject: KCTCS Exploratory Study Survey
Hello (President),

You are receiving this email because you indicated your willingness to participate in an exploratory study of presidential decision making in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System. Specifically, you indicated you are willing to complete an online survey. Completion of the survey indicates voluntary consent to participate in this phase of the study.

This phase of the study aims to examine the location of decision making in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System. Using a scale, you will select the location of decision making for specified academic, administrative, and personnel decisions. Additional instructions and a description of the scale are provided once you begin the survey. The survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Submission of the survey is confidential. All survey data will be reported in aggregate.

To complete the survey, please select the survey link. You may also copy and paste the URL below into a web browser. **Please complete the survey no later than (date).**

Take the Survey

If you have problems with the survey, please contact the researcher by email at jill.page@uky.edu. You may also reach the researcher by phone at 850-712-6320.

Copy and paste the URL below into a web browser:
(hyperlink)

Sincerely,

Follow this link to opt out of future emails:
(hyperlink)

Appendix G

Survey for Presidents Participating in the Study

In this survey, please select the response that best describes the location in your community college system for decisions concerning the noted areas.

1. the local community college;
2. primarily the college, with some input from the state community college system;
3. shared equally between the college and the state community college system;
4. primarily the state community college system, with some input from the local community college;
5. the state community college system.

Decision		Scale				
1.	Adding or discontinuing an academic department or division at a specific college	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Adjudicating faculty grievances	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Allocating review to individual colleges from non-state resources (e.g. direct cost reimbursements or auxiliary enterprises)	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Allocating vacant faculty positions among departments at individual colleges	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Appointing senior college administrators (including vice presidents)	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Approving budgets for departments at individual colleges	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Approving purchases over $1,000	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Assigning space and facilities to specific academic programs	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Authorizing fundraising for capital improvements for specific colleges	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Authorizing out-of-state travel for faculty members	1	2	3	4	5

11.	Building or acquisition of a campus facility	1	2	3	4	5
12.	Deciding content for self-study for regional accreditation	1	2	3	4	5
13.	Deciding whether to seek accreditation for programs	1	2	3	4	5
14.	Defining the mission, purpose, goals and objectives of the system	1	2	3	4	5
15.	Defining the mission, purpose, goals and objectives of individual colleges	1	2	3	4	5
16.	Determining faculty salary schedules	1	2	3	4	5
17.	Determining administrator or staff salary schedules	1	2	3	4	5
18.	Determining affirmative action targets for academic hiring	1	2	3	4	5
19.	Determining affirmative action targets for enrollment	1	2	3	4	5
20.	Determining specific reductions required by mid-year budget cuts	1	2	3	4	5
21.	Determining use of year-end budget surpluses	1	2	3	4	5
22.	Establishing faculty teaching loads	1	2	3	4	5
23.	Establishing new programs at individual colleges	1	2	3	4	5
24.	Establishing or closing branch campuses	1	2	3	4	5
25.	Granting faculty tenure or promotions	1	2	3	4	5

26.	Hiring new faculty members	1	2	3	4	5
27.	Negotiating with faculty unions in collective bargaining	1	2	3	4	5
28.	Offering courses and programs off campus	1	2	3	4	5
29.	Reviewing and eliminating existing programs at individual colleges	1	2	3	4	5
30.	Setting admissions standards at individual colleges	1	2	3	4	5
31.	Setting enrollment levels for individual colleges	1	2	3	4	5
32.	Setting degree requirements	1	2	3	4	5
33.	Setting student-faculty ratios within programs or departments	1	2	3	4	5
34.	Setting tuition levels	1	2	3	4	5
35.	Setting other student fees	1	2	3	4	5
36.	Transferring more than $5,000 between budget categories	1	2	3	4	5
37.	Determining system-level budgeting	1	2	3	4	5
38.	Determining college-level budgeting	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix H

Interview Solicitation Email

To:
From:
Subject: KCTCS Exploratory Study Interview Scheduling

Hello (President),

You are receiving this email because you confirmed your participation in an exploratory study of presidential decision making in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System. Specifically, you indicated you are willing to participate in Phase Two of the study, which involves one interview with the researcher. Participation in the interview indicates voluntary consent to participate in this phase of the study.

Phase Two of the study will explore presidents' experiences negotiating shared decision making between the system office and individual colleges. The researcher will ask you a series of predetermined, open-ended questions. The interview will be audio recorded. Interviews will take place in one of three formats, either in-person, Skype or other video-conferencing tool, or phone. If selected, in-person interviews will be conducted at your preferred campus location. The interview will last approximately one hour and take place on a scheduled date and time in April.

In participating in the interview, you will be assigned a pseudonym, so your name and identity will remain confidential. All information provided in your responses that may reveal your name, identity, or that of other people or places you describe in your responses will be replaced with pseudonyms. There is a risk that participants could be re-identified based on information that may be used in publication.

To schedule an interview, please reply by **(date)** with the following:

All interview formats (in-person, video-conferencing, and phone) that you are willing and able to use.

I will contact your executive assistant to schedule the interview. I will then email you a confirmation that includes the interview date and time based on your availability and any additional relevant details, such as campus location, Skype or other video-conferencing username, or direct telephone number.

If you have questions regarding scheduling an interview, please reply to this email or contact the researcher by email at jill.page@uky.edu. You may also reach the researcher by phone at 850-712-6320.

Sincerely,

Appendix I

Interview Protocol – College President

1. Tell me about the decision making process for determining faculty salary schedules.
    a. [If needed] What is the role of the system in this process?
    b. [If needed] What is the role of the individual colleges in this process?

2. Tell me about the decision making process for determining administrator or staff salary schedules.
    a. [If needed] What is the role of the system in this process?
    b. [If needed] What is the role of the individual colleges in this process?

3. Tell me about the decision making process for determining faculty teaching loads.
    a. [If needed] What is the role of the system in this process?
    b. [If needed] What is the role of the individual colleges in this process?

4. Tell me about the decision making process for granting faculty tenure or promotion.
    a. [If needed] What is the role of the system in this process?
    b. [If needed] What is the role of the individual colleges in this process?

5. Tell me about the strategic planning process for the system.
    a. [If needed] What is the role of the system in this process?
    b. [If needed] What is the role of the individual colleges in this process?

6. Tell me about the decision making process used when setting admissions standards.
    a. [If needed] What is the role of the system in this process?
    b. [If needed] What is the role of the individual colleges in this process?

7. Tell me about the decision making process used for setting enrollment targets for the individual colleges.
    a. [If needed] What is the role of the system in this process?
    b. [If needed] What is the role of the individual colleges in this process?

8. Tell me about the process you would go through for establishing or closing a campus location, from inception through establishment.
    a. [If needed] What role does the system play in the decision making process?
    b. [If needed] What role do the individual colleges play in the decision making process?

9. Tell me about how decisions are made for setting tuition.

a. [If needed] What role does the system play in the decision making process?
b. [If needed] What role do the individual colleges play in the decision making process?

10. Suppose your college needs to hire for a vacant Vice President position. Tell me about the process for filling this position, from position approval through selecting and hiring a candidate.

11. Suppose your college wants to create a new tenure-track faculty position. Tell me about the process for filling this position, from position approval through selecting and hiring a candidate.

12. Is the KCTCS Board of Regents involved in system decision making? If so, how?

13. Is the KCTCS Board of Regents involved in local college decision making? If so, how?

14. Is the college Board of Directors involved in system-level decision making? If so, how?

15. Is the college Board of Directors involved in local college decision making? If so, how?

16. Tell me about the relationship between the system Board of Regents and the college Board of Directors. How does this relationship impact decision making for the system? How does this relationship impact decision making for the individual colleges?

17. How would you describe the role of state legislators individually or the state legislature as a body in decision making for the system?

18. How would you describe the role of the Council on Postsecondary Education in decision making for the system?

19. How would you describe the role of state legislators individually or the state legislature as a body in decision making for the individual colleges?

20. How would you describe the role of the Council on Postsecondary Education in decision making for the individual colleges?

21. How would you describe the influence of state funding for higher education on decision making for the system?

22. How would you describe the influence of state funding for higher education on decision making for the individual colleges

Appendix J

Interview Protocol – System President

1. Tell me about the decision making process for determining faculty salary schedules.
    a. [If needed] What is the role of the system in this process?
    b. [If needed] What is the role of the individual colleges in this process?

2. Tell me about the decision making process for determining administrator or staff salary schedules.
    a. [If needed] What is the role of the system in this process?
    b. [If needed] What is the role of the individual colleges in this process?

3. Tell me about the decision making process for determining faculty teaching loads.
    a. [If needed] What is the role of the system in this process?
    b. [If needed] What is the role of the individual colleges in this process?

4. Tell me about the decision making process for granting faculty tenure or promotion.
    a. [If needed] What is the role of the system in this process?
    b. [If needed] What is the role of the individual colleges in this process?

5. Tell me about the strategic planning process for the system.
    a. [If needed] What is the role of the system in this process?
    b. [If needed] What is the role of the individual colleges in this process?

6. Tell me about the decision making process used when setting admissions standards.
    a. [If needed] What is the role of the system in this process?
    b. [If needed] What is the role of the individual colleges in this process?

7. Tell me about the decision making process used for setting enrollment targets for the individual colleges.
    a. [If needed] What is the role of the system in this process?
    b. [If needed] What is the role of the individual colleges in this process?

8. Tell me about the process a college would go through for establishing or closing a campus location, from inception through establishment.
    a. [If needed] What role does the system play in the decision making process?
    b. [If needed] What role does the individual college play in the decision making process?

9. Tell me about how decisions are made for setting tuition.
    a. [If needed] What role does the system play in the decision making process?
    b. [If needed] What role do the individual colleges play in the decision making process?

10. Suppose a college needs to hire for a vacant Vice President position. Tell me about the process for filling this position, from position approval through selecting and hiring a candidate.

11. Suppose a college wants to create a new tenure-track faculty position. Tell me about the process for filling this position, from position approval through selecting and hiring a candidate.

12. Is the KCTCS Board of Regents involved in system decision making? If so, how?

13. Is the KCTCS Board of Regents involved in local college decision making? If so, how?

14. Is the Board of Directors for each of the colleges involved in system-level decision making? If so, how?

15. Is the Board of Directors for each of the colleges involved in local college decision making? If so, how?

16. Tell me about the relationship between the system Board of Regents and the college Board of Directors. How does this relationship impact decision making for the system? How does this relationship impact decision making for the individual colleges?

17. How would you describe the role of state legislators individually or the state legislature as a body in decision making for the system?

18. How would you describe the role of the Council on Postsecondary Education in decision making for the system?

19. How would you describe the role of state legislators individually or the state legislature as a body in decision making for the individual colleges?

20. How would you describe the role of the Council on Postsecondary Education in decision making for the individual colleges?

21. How would you describe the influence of state funding for higher education on decision making for the system?

22. How would you describe the influence of state funding for higher education on decision making for the individual colleges?

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EMPLOYMENT & OTHER POSITIONS

Assistant Director; Bluegrass Community and Technical College	2012-Present
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PUBLICATIONS

Book Reviews

Page, J. (2012). The fate of liberal education: A review of "The Marketplace of Ideas: Reform and Resistance in the American University" by Louis Menand. *Kentucky Journal of Higher Education Policy and Practice,* 1(2).

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